

FREE BIBLE COMMENTARY

OLD TESTAMENT SPECIAL TOPICS

By Dr. Bob Utley, Retired Professor of Hermeneutics

The following Old Testament Special Topics are taken from our verse by verse commentaries. They deal with:

1. Word studies
2. Theological issues
3. Hermeneutical issues
4. Cultural issues
5. Geographical issues
6. “Hot button” issues in the church today

We hope this will be a quick way for you to access these topics.

[A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#)

A

[Abomination](#)

[Additions to Deuteronomy](#)

[Age and Formation of Earth](#)

[This Age and the Age to Come](#)

[Age of Accountability](#)

[Alcohol \(fermentation\) and Alcoholism \(addiction\)](#)

[Almsgiving](#)

[Amen](#)

[Amorite](#)

[Ancient Near Eastern Calendars](#)

[Ancient Near Eastern Weights and Volumes](#)

[The Angel of the Lord](#)

[Angels and the Demonic](#)

[Anthropomorphic Language Used for God](#)

B

[Believe](#)

[Blameless, Innocent, Guiltless, Without Reproach](#)

[Blessing](#)

[Boasting](#)

[Bob's Evangelical Biases](#)

C

[Characteristics of Israel's God](#)

[Chariots](#)

[Cherubim](#)

[Consequences of Idolatry](#)

[Cornerstone](#)

[Covenant](#)

[Covenant Promises to the Patriarchs](#)

[Cremation](#)

[Cubit](#)

[Curse](#)

D

[Date of the Exodus](#)

[The Dead](#)

[The Death Penalty in Israel](#)

[The Deity of Christ from the OT](#)

[Degrees of Rewards and Punishment](#)

[The Demonic](#)

E

[Election/Predestination and the Need for a Theological Balance](#)

F

[Faith](#)

[The Faithful Remnant](#)

[The Fall](#)

[Fatherhood of God](#)

[Feasts of Israel](#)

[Fertility Worship of the Ancient Near East](#)

[Fire](#)

[Food Laws](#)

[Forever \(*'Olam*\)](#)

G

[Giants](#)

[Glory](#)

[God Described as Human](#)

[Grieving Rites](#)

H

[Haggai](#)

[Hang](#)

[The Heart](#)

[Hebrew Poetry](#)

[Hermeneutics](#)

[Historical Allusions to Persian Kings](#)

[Holy](#)

[Horns used by Israel](#)

I

[Israel](#)

[Israel's Mandated Response to Canaanite Fertility Worship](#)

J

[Jesus the Nazarene](#)

K

[Know](#)

L

[Laying on of Hands](#)

[Lions in the Old Testament](#)

[Location of Mt Sinai](#)

[The Lord Hardened](#)

[Lovingkindness \(*Hesed*\)](#)

M

[Matthew 27:9](#)

[Medo-Persian Empire Survey of the Rise of Cyrus II](#)

[*Molech*](#)

[Moses' Authorship of the Pentateuch](#)

N

["The Name" of YHWH](#)

[Names for Deity](#)

[Natural Resources](#)

[New Testament Theological Development on the Fall](#)

[The Number Twelve](#)

O

[The Old Testament as History](#)

[The Old Testament Food Laws](#)

[Old Testament Historiography Compared with Near Eastern Cultures](#)

[Old Testament Narrative](#)

[Old Testament Predictions of the Future vs. New Testament Predictions](#)

[Old Testament Prophecy](#)

[Old Testament Titles of the Special Coming One](#)

P

[Passover](#)

[Peace and War](#)

[Personal Evil](#)

[Possess the Land](#)

[Predestination \(Calvinism\) vs. Human Free Will \(Arminianism\)](#)

[Pre-Israelite Inhabitants of Palestine](#)

[The Problems and Limitations of Human Language](#)

[Prophet \(the different Hebrew terms\)](#)

[Prophecy](#)

[Prophetic Models vs. Apostolic Models](#)

R

[Racism](#)

[Ransom/Redeem](#)

[The Red Sea](#)

[The Remnant, Three Senses](#)

[Repentance in the Old Testament](#)

[Rewards and Punishments](#)

[Righteousness](#)

S

[The Route of the Exodus](#)

[Sabbath](#)

[Sacrifices in Mesopotamia and Israel and Their Significance](#)

[Sacrificial Systems of the Ancient Near East](#)

[Satan](#)

[The Serpent](#)

[*Sheol*](#)

[“The Sons of God” in Genesis 6](#)

[Symbolic Numbers in Scripture](#)

T

[The Tension Between Old Covenant Prophetic Models and New Covenant Apostolic Models](#)

[“Tensions”](#)

[*Teraphim*](#)

[Terms for God’s Revelation](#)

[Terms Used for Tall/Powerful Warriors or People Groups](#)

[Thousand \(*Eleph*\)](#)

[Tithe in the Mosaic Legislation](#)

[Titles of the Special Coming One](#)

[The Trinity](#)

[Trust](#)

[Twelve](#)

W

[Where Are the Dead?](#)

[Why Do OT Covenant Promises Seem so Different from NT Covenant Promises?](#)

[Why God Clothed Adam and Eve with Animal Skins](#)

[Weights and Volumes](#)

[The Wildernesses of the Exodus](#)

[Wine and Strong Drink](#)

[Women in the Bible](#)

[Worship](#)

Y

[YHWH's Covenant Requirements of Israel](#)

[YHWH's Grace Acts to Israel](#)

[YHWH Hardened](#)

[Yom](#)

Z

[Zechariah](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: ABOMINATIONS

“Abominations” (BDB 1072) can refer to several things:

1. things related to Egyptians:

- a. they loathe eating with Hebrews, Gen. 43:32
- b. they loathe shepherds, Gen. 46:34
- c. they loathe Hebrew sacrifices, Exod. 8:26

2. things related to YHWH's feelings toward Israel's actions:

- a. unclean food, Deut. 14:2
- b. idols, Deut. 7:25; 18:9,12; 27:15
- c. pagan spiritists, Deut. 18:9,12
- d. burning children to *Molech*, Lev. 18:21-22; 20:2-5; Deut. 12:31; 18:9,12; II Kgs. 16:3; 17:17-18; 21:6; Jer. 32:35
- e. Canaanite idolatry, Deut. 13:14; 17:4; 20:17-18; 32:16; Isa. 44:19; Jer. 16:18; Ezek. 5:11; 6:9; 11:18,21; 14:6; 16:50; 18:12
- f. sacrificing blemished animals, Deut. 17:1 (cf. 15:19-23; Mal. 1:12-13)
- g. sacrificing to idols, Jer. 44:4-5
- h. remarrying a woman who you have previously divorced, Deut. 24:2
- i. women wearing man's clothes (possibly Canaan worship), Deut. 22:5
- j. money from cultic prostitution (Canaanite worship), Deut. 23:18
- k. Israel's idolatry, Jer. 2:7
- l. homosexuality (possibly Canaanite worship), Lev. 18:22; 20:13
- m. use of false weights, Det. 25:16; Pro. 11:1; 20:23
- n. food laws violated (possibly Canaanite worship), Deut. 14:3

3. Examples in Wisdom Literature:

- a. Proverbs 3:32; 6:16-19; 11:1,20; 12:22; 15:8,9,26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 21:27; 28:9
- b. Psalms 88:8
- c. Job 30:10

4. There is a recurrent eschatological phrase “abomination of desolation,” which is used in Daniel (cf. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). It seems to refer to three different occasions (multiple fulfillment prophecy):
 - a. Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the interbiblical Maccabean period (cf. I Macc. 1:54,59; II Macc. 6:1-2)
 - b. the roman general (later Emperor), Titus, who sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in A.D. 70 (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20)
 - c. an end-time world leader called “the man of lawlessness” (cf. II Thess. 2:3-4) or “the Antichrist” (cf. I John 2:18; 4:3; Revelation 13)

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: LATER ADDITIONS TO DEUTERONOMY

This paragraph (10:6-9) is seen by many modern scholars to be one of several later editorial additions to the writings of Moses. Although it cannot be proven that this summary is not from the Mosaic period, it is clear that there are several editorial inserts. Israel was in Egypt for centuries and Egyptian scribes, unlike Mesopotamian scribes, were trained to update texts at will. For those of us who believe in the inspiration and protection of divine revelation assert the Spirit’s guidance in the OT related to these supposed additions. They do not affect major doctrines or call into question the historicity of the surrounding texts. It must be admitted by moderns that we simply do not know:

1. the time
2. the author
3. the method of compilation

of the OT in its earliest stages. We presuppositionally accept the MT as preserving the words of God!

A new theory for some of the supposed editorial additions has been suggested by R. H. Polzin, “Deuteronomy” in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. It posits the added comments are from a narrator, not an editor. He suggests that this narrator’s comments can be seen in 1:1-5; 2:10-12, 20-23; 3:9, 11, 13b-14; 4:4-5:1a; 10:6-7, 9; 27:1a, 9a, 11; 28:69; 29:1; 31:1, 7a, 9-10a, 14a, 14c-16a, 22-23a, 24-25, 30; 32:44-45, 48; 33:1; 34:1-4a, 5-12. Polzin asserts that this supposed narrator is claiming an authority as reliable as Moses, which sets the stage for the “Deuteronomic history” of Joshua - Kings. This theory would explain the similarities between the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE AGE AND FORMATION OF THE EARTH

- I. This area of study is biased because of the assumptions that must be made to even pursue thinking rationally about the subject. The assumptions must be the focus of an evaluation of the differing opinions expressed by cosmologists, geologists and the related sciences compared to theological understanding and interpretations.
- II. For science the apparent assumptions are:
 - A. that the rates of change (i.e. physical, chemical and biological) recorded and measured on the earth today are constant in the past (i.e. uniformitarianism, “the present is the key to the past”)
 - B. radiometric dating (called absolute dating), which is the chronological key to dating the earth and cosmic events, is bedeviled by several assumptions:
 1. the original composition of the rocks (i.e. relation of parent and daughter elements of unstable atomic elements)
 2. the exact half-life of these elements

3. temperature also affects parent and daughter percentages in a sample (i.e. time of formation and/or volcanic magma chambers)
 4. The original source and timing of the creation of radioactive elements are not certain. Current theories state that the heavier elements are created by thermonuclear reactions in stars and supernovas.
- C. that the six assumed sequence principles of geology (called relative dating) affect paleontology:
1. the law of superposition – in an undeformed sequence of sedimentary rocks, the bed layer above is younger and the bed layer below is older
 2. the principle of original horizontality – layers of rudimentary rock were deposited in a nearly horizontal plain
 3. the principle of cross-cutting relationships – when rocks are cut or offset by a fault, they must be older than the fault
 4. the principle of inclusions – rock masses adjacent to one another, one will usually have pieces of the lower one embedded in the above layer which confirms the assumption of #1
 5. the principle of correlations – rocks of similar makeup but from different areas must be matched up, when this cannot be done then similar fossils are used to show similar dates of formation
 6. the principle of fossil succession – fossil organisms succeed one another in a definite and determinable sequence:
 - a. widespread fossils
 - b. limited to a short span of geologic time

III. Some comments by scientists

- A. Most scientists realize that true science is a research method which seeks to correlate all known facts and anomalies into a testable theory. Some things by their very nature are not testable.
- B. Some comments from scientists about scientific assumptions in this area
1. “The doctrine (i.e. uniformitarianism) should not be taken too literally. To say that geological processes in the past were the same as those occurring today is not to suggest that they always had the same relative importance and operated at precisely the same rate” (Tarbuck and Lutgens, *Earth Science*, 6th ed. p. 262).
 2. “It is important to realize that an accurate radiometric date can be obtained only if the mineral remains in a closed system during the period of its formation; that is, a correct date is not possible unless there was neither addition nor loss of parent or daughter isotopes” (*Earth Science*, 6th ed. p. 276).
 3. “We hasten to stress that this uniformity is an assumption that we make about nature, so is a doctrine rather than a logically proved law” (Dott and Balten, *Evolution of the Earth*, 4th ed. p. 44).
 4. “The decay constants that characterize radioactive decay rates, and govern the relationship between isotopic data and their corresponding radio isotopic ages are inexactly known. In consequence, the accuracy of some of the most precise dating methods, such as $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ technique, may be an order of magnitude or more worse than their precision (“Progress and challenges in geochronology” by Renne,

Ludwig and Karner in *Science Progress* (2000), 83 (1), 107).

5. "People without training in science may not understand that any radiometric dating method can only be trusted for samples with ages close to the half-life of the element in question (Hugh Ross, *Reasons to Believe* newsletter).

IV. Assumptions are not unique to the scientific community but obviously also exist in the religious community.

A. Humans are drawn to a unifying principle or model to correlate their sense experience and provide emotional stability. In science this unifying principle has become "evolution."

1. Theodosius Dobzhansky, "Changing man," *Science*, 155, 409-415, "Evolution is a process which has produced life from non-life, which has brought forth man from animals, and which may conceivably continue doing remarkable things in the future."
2. Brian J. Alters and Sandra M. Alters, *Defining Evolution*, p. 104, "evolution is the basic context of all biological sciences...evolution is the explanatory framework, the unifying theory. It is indispensable to the study of biology, just as the atomic theory is indispensable to the study of chemistry."

B. For many conservative Christians the unifying theory (i.e. interpretation) has become a literal interpretation of Genesis 1-3. This is true for young earth literalists (*Creation Research Society* dates the earth at about 10,000 years) and old earth literalists (*Reasons to Believe* dates the earth in light of modern geology at 4.6 billion years). One's interpretation of Scripture becomes a lens through which all else is viewed and evaluated. One cannot fault subjective assumption, for all human knowledge is at some level pre-suppositional. However, the evaluation of one's presuppositions is crucial for a proper evaluation of their "truth" statements.

C. Fundamental Christianity is trying to clothe itself in "scientific" argument when the central issue is a hermeneutical methodology. This is not to imply that "modern evolutionary science" is not pre-suppositional or that its conclusions are not shaped by an a priori world-view. We must be careful and analytical of both. There seems to be evidence on both sides. I must ask myself to which view am I naturally, emotionally or educationally drawn (i.e. self-fulfilling assumption)?

V. Personal conclusion

A. Since I am a theologian, not a scientist, it was crucial for me to read and assimilate as much as I could from modern uniformitarian science. I am not personally agitated by "evolution" but by "naturalism" (one definition made popular by Carl Sagan is, "the universe is all that was, all that is and all that will be").

I realize this is a bias, but my unifying theory is supernaturalism and special creationism, however, I do not deny or feel threatened by evolution. My basic perspective is that there is a personal God Who initiated and directs the process for a purpose! For me "intelligent design" becomes a reasonable theory (cf. M. J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box* and William A. Demski, ed. *Mere Creation: Science, Faith and Intelligent Design*). It is the "randomness" of evolution and the "agentlessness" of naturalism that causes me personal pain and confusion. Process is an obvious part of life. I must be sure that I do not embrace what is comfortable without evaluation. I have tried to identify my assumptions:

1. Genesis 1-3 (and for that matter, much of the book of Revelation), is not

intended by its original inspired author to be taken literally. “How it all began” and “How it will all end” is veiled in literary genre.

2. Evolution is obvious at certain levels (“horizontal evolution,” “micro-evolution,” evolution within species) but not the only unifying factor for life on this planet nor the development of the universe. There is mystery here! I feel personally comfortable with the Bible (i.e. special revelation) telling me the “Who” and the “why” and nature (i.e. natural revelation), that is, modern scientific research, telling me the “how” and the “when” based on developing models and theories.
3. Even the ultimate reality of “theistic evolution” would not cause me to reject any of my faith assumptions. See Darrel R. Falk, *Coming to Peace with Science: Bridging the World’s Between Faith and Biology*. I do have faith assumptions (as do you)! My world-view is biblical Christianity. My world-picture is a growing and changing understanding.

B. The “real” age of the earth is not an issue in my theology except:

1. The apparent “Big Bang” concept of universal organization of matter which asserts a beginning to the universe seems to limit the possibilities of an unlimited time for evolutionary development (i.e. naturalism).
2. The starts and stops in the fossil records may imply a “punctuated equilibrium” which asserts that evolutionary change occurs in spurts (possibly God’s on-going creative acts) and not necessarily only gradual change over time.
3. An old earth and a recent special creation of humanity is a pre-suppositional model I choose to embrace until I understand more from my study of the Bible, archaeology and modern science. The order of these shows my bias (but we all have them)!
4. Science is not an enemy to me, nor a savior! It is so exciting to live in this age of increasing knowledge! It is so comforting to be a hermeneutically informed believer! Integration of faith and reason, or the Bible and Science, with credibility, is a wonderful possibility!

VI. Present assumptions as to the age of the earth

- A. The radiometric dating of moon rocks and meteors has been consistent at 4.6 billion years. They contain the same elements as the planets of this solar system so the inference is that our sun and its associated planets, comets and asteroids were formed at this time. The oldest earth rocks have been radiometric dated at 3.8 billion years.
- B. A date for the supernatural creation of the first human pair (*Homo sapiens*) is a more difficult issue but it is in the tens of thousands degree range, possibly 40,000. Time is only an issue to those of us created in a chronological sequential time frame. God is not affected by the passing of time. I believe the earth and its environment was created over time for the specific purpose of providing a “place” for God to fellowship with His highest creation, who was created by Him in His image. The only source for these beliefs is an inspired Bible. I cling to it and allow modern science to increase my understanding of the physical aspects of God’s creative activity.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

The OT prophets viewed the future as an extension of the present. For them the future will be a restoration of geographical Israel. However, even they saw it as a new day (cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22). With the continued willful rejection of YHWH by the descendants of Abraham (even after the exile) a new paradigm developed in Jewish intertestamental apocalyptic literature (i.e., I Enoch, IV Ezra, II Baruch). These writings begin to distinguish between two ages: a current evil age dominated by Satan and a coming age of righteousness dominated by the Spirit and inaugurated by the Messiah (often a dynamic warrior). In this area of theology (eschatology) there is an obvious development. Theologians call this “progressive revelation.” The NT affirms this new cosmic reality of two ages (i.e., a temporal dualism):

Jesus	Paul	Hebrews
Matthew 12:32	Romans 12:2	1:2
Matthew 13:22 & 29	I Cor. 1:20; 2:6,8; 3:18	6:5
Mark 10:30	II Cor. 4:4	11:3
Luke 16:8	Galatians 1:4	
Luke 18:30	Eph. 1:21; 2:1,7; 6:12	
Luke 20:34-35	I Timothy 6:17	
	II Timothy 4:10	
	Titus 2:12	

In NT theology these two Jewish ages have been overlapped because of the unexpected and overlooked predictions of the two comings of the Messiah. The incarnation of Jesus fulfilled the OT prophecies of the inauguration of the new age (Dan. 2:44-45). However, the OT also saw His coming as Judge and Conqueror, yet He came at first as the Suffering Servant (cf. Isaiah 53), humble and meek (cf. Zech. 9:9). He will return in power just as the OT predicted (cf. Revelation 19). This two-stage fulfillment caused the Kingdom to be present (inaugurated), but future (not fully consummated). This is the NT tension of “the already, but not yet”!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The church, following Paul, has focused on Genesis 3 as the source of human sin/evil. This developed into an Augustinian/Calvinistic emphasis on total depravity (i.e., human inability to respond to God unaided). This became one of the five pillars of Calvinism and a basic principle of Christianity. However, the rabbis never focused on Genesis 3 as the source of evil (some did focus on Genesis 6), but on individual responsibility based on knowledge and commitment. They would posit two intents (*netzers*), one good and one evil. The classical example would be the saying, “in every human heart are two dogs, one evil and one good. The one that is fed the most becomes the biggest.” Therefore, humans are only responsible after a period of maturity and covenant knowledge/commitment (i.e., *Bar Mitzvah* for boys at age 13 and *Bat Mitzvah* for girls at age 12). Other biblical examples of this theological perspective are Jonah 4:11 and Isaiah 7:15-16.

To put this is in contrasting terms:

- 1. Paul/Augustine/Calvin focused on God’s sovereignty and human inability.
- 2. Rabbis/Jesus/Paul focused on covenantal responsibility.

It is not an either/or, but a both/and! Be careful of theological systems! Realize that biblical truth is presented in tension-filled pairs. Believers are to live godly lives within the tension, not desire quick, easy answers or playing the blame game!

SPECIAL TOPIC: ALCOHOL (FERMENTATION) AND ALCOHOLISM (ADDICTION)

I. Biblical Terms

A. Old Testament

1. *Yayin* - This is the general term for wine (BDB 406), which is used 141 times. The etymology is uncertain because it is not from a Hebrew root. It always means fermented fruit juice, usually grape. Some typical passages are Gen. 9:21; Exod. 29:40; Num. 15:5,10.
2. *Tirosh* - This is “new wine” (BDB 440). Because of climatic conditions of the Near East, fermentation started as soon as six hours after extracting the juice. This term refers to wine in the process of fermenting. For some typical passages see Deut. 12:17; 18:4; Isa. 62:8-9; Hos. 4:11.
3. *Asis* - This is obviously alcoholic beverages (“sweet wine” BDB 779, e.g., Joel 1:5; Isa. 49:26).
4. *Sekar* - This is the term “strong drink” (BDB 1016). The Hebrew root is used in the term “drunk” or “drunkard.” It had something added to it to make it more intoxicating. It is parallel to *yayin* (cf. Prov. 20:1; 31:6; Isa. 28:7).

B. New Testament

1. *Oinos* - the Greek equivalent of *Yayin*.
2. *Neos oinos* (new wine) - the Greek equivalent of *tirosh* (cf. Mark 2:22).
3. *Gleuchos vinos* (sweet wine, *asis*) - wine in the early stages of fermentation (cf. Acts 2:13).

II. Biblical Usage

A. Old Testament

1. Wine is a gift of God (Gen. 27:28; Ps. 104:14-15; Eccl. 9:7; Hos. 2:8-9; Joel 2:19,24; Amos 9:13; Zech. 10:7).
2. Wine is a part of a sacrificial offering (Exod. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:7,10; 28:14; Deut. 14:26; Judg. 9:13).
3. Wine is used as medicine (II Sam. 16:2; Prov. 31:6-7).
4. Wine can be a real problem (Noah - Gen. 9:21; Lot - Gen. 19:33,35; Samson - Judg. 16:19; Nabal - I Sam. 25:36; Uriah - II Sam. 11:13; Ammon - II Sam. 13:28; Elah - I Kin. 16:9; Benhadad - I Kin. 20:12; Rulers - Amos 6:6; and Ladies - Amos 4).
5. Wine can be abused (Prov. 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-5; Isa. 5:11,22; 19:14; 28:7-8; Hosea 4:11).
6. Wine was prohibited to certain groups (Priests on duty, Lev. 10:9; Ezek. 44:21; Nazarites, Num. 6; and Rulers, Prov. 31:4-5; Isa. 56:11-12; Hosea 7:5).
7. Wine is used in an eschatological setting (Amos 9:13; Joel 3:18; Zech. 9:17).

B. Interbiblical

1. Wine in moderation is very helpful (Ecclesiasticus 31:27-30).

2. The rabbis say, "Wine is the greatest of all medicine, where wine is lacking, then drugs are needed." (BB 58b).

C. New Testament

1. Jesus changed a large quantity of water into wine (John 2:1-11).
2. Jesus drank wine (Matt. 11:18-19; Luke 7:33-34; 22:17ff).
3. Peter accused of drunkenness on "new wine" at Pentecost (Acts 2:13).
4. Wine can be used as medicine (Mark 15:23; Luke 10:34; I Tim. 5:23).
5. Leaders are not to be abusers. This does not mean total abstainers (I Tim. 3:3,8; Titus 1:7; 2:3; I Pet. 4:3).
6. Wine used in eschatological settings (Matt. 22:1ff; Rev. 19:9).
7. Drunkenness is deplored (Matt. 24:49; Luke 11:45; 21:34; I Cor. 5:11-13; 6:10; Gal. 5:21; I Pet. 4:3; Rom. 13:13-14).

III. Theological Insight

A. Dialectical tension

1. Wine is the gift of God.
2. Drunkenness is a major problem.
3. Believers in some cultures must limit their freedoms for the sake of the gospel (Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; I Corinthians 8-10; Romans 14).

B. Tendency to go beyond given bounds

1. God is the source of all good things.
2. Fallen mankind has abused all of God's gifts by taking them beyond God-given bounds.

- C. Abuse is in us, not in things. There is nothing evil in the physical creation (cf. Mark 7:18-23; Rom. 14:14,20; I Cor. 10:25-26; I Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:15).

IV. First Century Jewish Culture and Fermentation

- A. Fermentation begins very soon, approximately 6 hours after the grape is crushed.
- B. Jewish tradition says that when a slight foam appeared on the surface (sign of fermentation), it is liable to the wine-tithe (*Ma aseroth* 1:7). It was called "new wine" or "sweet wine."
- C. The primary violent fermentation was complete after one week.
- D. The secondary fermentation took about 40 days. At this state it is considered "aged wine" and could be offered on the altar (*Edhuyyoth* 6:1).
- E. Wine that had rested on its lees (old wine) was considered good but had to be strained well before use.
- F. Wine was considered to be properly aged usually after one year of fermentation. Three years was the longest period of time that wine could be safely stored. It was called "old wine" and had to be diluted with water.
- G. Only in the last 100 years with a sterile environment and chemical additives has fermentation been postponed. The ancient world could not stop the natural process of fermentation.

V. Closing Statements

- A. Be sure your experience, theology, and biblical interpretation does not depreciate Jesus and first century Jewish/Christian culture! They were obviously not total-abstainers.

- B. I am not advocating the social use of alcohol. However, many have overstated the Bible's position on this subject and now claim superior righteousness based on a cultural/denominational bias.
- C. For me, Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8-10 have provided insight and guidelines based on love and respect for fellow believers and the spread of the gospel in our cultures, not personal freedom or judgmental criticism. If the Bible is the only source for faith and practice, then maybe we must all rethink this issue.
- D. If we push total abstinence as God's will, what do we imply about Jesus, as well as those modern cultures that regularly use wine (e.g., Europe, Israel, Argentina)?

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: ALMSGIVING

I. The term itself

- A. This term developed within Judaism (i.e., the Septuagint period).
- B. It refers to giving to the poor and/or needy.
- C. The English word "almsgiving" comes from a contraction of the Greek term *eleēmosunē*.

II. Old Testament concept

- A. The concept of helping the poor was expressed early in the Torah (writings of Moses, Genesis-Deuteronomy).
 - 1. typical context, Deut. 15:7-11
 - 2. "gleaning," leaving part of the harvest for the poor, Lev. 19:9; 23:22; Deut. 24:20
 - 3. "sabbath year," allowing the poor to eat the produce of the seventh, fallow year, Exod. 23:10-11; Lev. 25:2-7.
- B. The concept was developed in Wisdom Literature (selected examples)
 - 1. Job 5:8-16; 29:12-17 (the wicked described in 24:1-12)
 - 2. the Psalms 11:7
 - 3. Proverbs 11:4; 14:21,31; 16:6; 21:3,13

III. Development in Judaism

- A. The first division of the Mishnah deals with how to treat the poor, needy, and local Levites.
- B. Selected quotes
 - 1. "as water extinguishes a blazing fire, so almsgiving atones for sin" (Ecclesiasticus [also known as the Wisdom of Ben Sirach] 3:30, NRSV)
 - 2. "store up almsgiving in your treasury and it will rescue you from every disaster" (Ecclesiasticus 29:12, NRSV)
 - 3. "for those who act in accordance with truth will prosper in all their activities. To all those who practice righteousness ⁷give alms from your possessions, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor, and the face of God will not be turned away from you.⁸If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion; if few,

do not be afraid to give according to the little you have. So you will be laying up a good treasure for yourself against the day of necessity. ¹⁰For almsgiving delivers from death and keeps you from going into the Darkness. ¹¹Indeed, almsgiving, for all who practice it, is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High.” (Tobit 4:6-11, NRSV)

4. “⁸Prayer and fasting is good, but better than both is almsgiving with righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than wealth with wrongdoing. It is better to give alms than to lay up gold.⁹For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin. Those who give alms will enjoy a full life.” (Tobit 12:8-9, NRSV)

C. The last quote from Tobit 12:8-9 shows the problem developing. Human actions/human merits were seen as the mechanism for both forgiveness and abundance.

This concept developed further in the Septuagint, where the Greek term for almsgiving (*eleēmosunē*) became a synonym for righteousness (*dikaïosunē*). They could be substituted

each other in translating the Hebrew terms *hesed* (God’s covenant love and loyalty, cf. Deut. 6:25; 24:13; Isa. 1:27; 28:17; 59:16; Dan. 4:27).

D. Human acts of compassion became a goal in themselves to achieve one’s personal abundance here and salvation at death. The act itself, instead of the motive behind the act, became theologically preeminent. God looks at the heart, then judges the work of the hand. This was the teaching of the rabbis, but it somehow got lost in the pursuit of individual self righteousness (cf. Micah 6:8).

IV. New Testament reaction

A. The term is found in:

1. Matt. 6:1-4
2. Luke 11:41; 12:33
3. Acts 3:2-3,10; 10:2,4,31; 24:17

B. Jesus addresses the traditional Jewish understanding of righteousness (cf. II Clement 16:4) in His Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 5-7) as referring to

1. almsgiving
2. fasting
3. prayer

Some Jews were trusting in their actions. These actions were meant to flow out of a love for God, His word, and covenant brothers and sisters, not self-interest or self righteousness! Humility is a guideline for proper action. The heart is crucial. The heart is desperately wicked. God must change the heart. The new heart emulates God!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN

I. OLD TESTAMENT

A. The term “Amen” is from a Hebrew word for truth (*emeth*) or truthfulness (*emun, emunah*) and faith or faithfulness.

B. Its etymology is from a person's physical stable stance (BDB 52-54). The opposite would be one who is unstable, slipping (cf. Deut. 28:64-67; Ps. 40:2; 73:18; Jer. 23:12) or stumbling (cf. Ps. 73:2). From this literal usage developed the metaphorical extension of faithful, trustworthy, loyal, and dependable (cf. Gen. 15:6; Hab. 2:4).

C. Special usages:

1. a pillar, II Kgs. 18:16 (I Tim. 3:15)
2. assurance, Exod. 17:12
3. steadiness, Exod. 17:12
4. stability, Isa. 33:6; 34:5-7
5. true, I Kgs. 10:6; 17:24; 22:16; Prov. 12:22
6. firm, II Chr. 20:20; Isa. 7:9
7. reliable (Torah), Ps. 119:43,142,151,168

D. In the OT two other Hebrew terms are used for active faith:

1. *bth*, trust (BDB 105)
2. *yr'*, fear, respect, worship (BDB 431, cf. Gen. 22:12)

E. From the sense of trust or trustworthiness developed a liturgical usage which was used to affirm a true or trustworthy statement of another (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; Neh. 8:6; Ps. 41:13; 70:19; 89:52; 106:48).

F. The theological key to this term is not mankind's faithfulness, but YHWH's (cf. Exod. 34:6; Deut. 32:4; Ps. 108:4; 115:1; 117:2; 138:2). Fallen humanity's only hope is the merciful faithful covenant loyalty of YHWH and His promises.

Those who know YHWH are to be like Him (cf. Hab. 2:4). The Bible is history and a record of God restoring His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) in mankind. Salvation restores mankind's ability to have intimate fellowship with God. This is why we were created.

II. NEW TESTAMENT

A. The use of the word "amen" as a concluding liturgical affirmation of the trustworthiness of a statement is common in the NT (cf. I Cor. 14:16; II Cor. 1:20; Rev. 1:7; 5:14; 7:12)

B. The use of the term as a close to a prayer is common in the NT (cf. Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; 6:18; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; II Thess. 3:18; I Tim. 1:17; 6:16; II Tim. 4:18).

C. Jesus is the only one who used the term (often doubled in John) to introduce significant statements (cf. Luke 4:24; 12:37; 18:17,29; 21:32; 23:43)

D. It is used as a title for Jesus in Rev. 3:14 (possibly a title of YHWH from Isa. 65:16).

E. The concept of faithfulness or faith, trustworthiness, or trust is expressed in the Greek term *pistos* or *pistis*, which is translated into English as trust, faith, believe.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: AMORITE

The term "Amorite" is used in three senses.

1. one of the several indigenous tribes of Canaan (e.g. Gen. 10:16; 15:18-21; Exod. 3:17; Josh. 24:11; Ezra 9:1; Neh. 9:8 [nomadic tribes from Akkadian texts])
2. a general name for people to the west of Mesopotamia (cf. v. 10; Gen. 15:16; Jdgs. 6:10; II Kgs. 21:11;

Ezek. 16:3, also from Assyrian and Babylonian texts)

3. inhabitants of the highlands as opposed to Canaanites who occupy the lowlands (cf. Deut. 1:7,19,20; 3:2)

4. Canaanite and Amorite are both used to designate all the indigenous tribes of Palestine/Canaan

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN CALENDARS

Canaanite (I Kgs. 6:1,37-38; 8:2)	Sumerian-Babylonian (Nippur Calendar)	Hebrew (Geezer Calendar)	Modern Equivalents
Abib (“greenheads” of barley)	Nisanu	Nisan	March-April
Zin (spring brilliance)	Ayar	Iyyar	April-May
	Simanu	Sivan	May-June
	Du-uzu	Tammuz	June-July
	Abu	Ab	July-August
	Ululu	Elul	August-September
Ethanim (permanent water source)	Teshritu	Tishri	September-October
Bul (rains on produce)	Arah-samna	Marcheshvan	October-November
	Kislimu	Chislev	November-December
	Tebitu	Tebeth	December-January
	Shabatu	Shebat	January-February
	Adaru	Adar	February-March

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN WEIGHTS AND VOLUMES (METROLOGY)

The weights and measurements used in commerce were crucial in ancient agricultural economy. The Bible urges the Jews to be fair in their dealings with one another (cf. Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-16; Prov. 11:1; 16:11; 20:1). The real problem was not only honesty, but the non-standardized terms and systems used in Palestine. It seems that there were two sets of weights; a “light” and a “heavy” of each amount (see *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, p. 831). Also the decimal system (base of 10) of Egypt had been combined with the sexagesimal (base of 6) of Mesopotamia.

Many of the “sizes” and “amounts” used were based on human body parts, animal loads, and farmer’s containers, none of which were standardized. Therefore, the charts are only estimations and are tentative. The easiest way to show weights and measures is on a relational chart.

I. Volume terms used most often

A. Dry measures

1. Homer (BDB 330, possibly a “donkey-load,” BDB 331), e.g., Lev. 27:16; Hosea 3:2
2. Letekh (or lethech, BDB 547), cf. Hosea 3:2
3. Ephah (BDB 35), e.g., Exod. 16:36; Lev. 19:36; Ezek. 45:10-11,13,24
4. Se’ah (BDB 684, e.g., Gen. 18:6; I Sam. 25:18; I Kgs. 18:32
5. Omer (BDB 771 II, possibly “a sheaf: [a row of fallen grain], BDB 771 I), e.g., Exod. 16:16,22,36; Lev. 23:10-15
6. ‘Issaron (BDB 798, “a tenth part”), e.g., Exod. 29:40; Lev. 14:21
7. Qav (or Kab, BDB 866), cf. II Kgs. 6:25

B. Liquid Measures

1. Kor (BDB 499), e.g., I Kgs. 5:2,25; Ezek. 45:14
 2. Bath (BDB 330, equal to a homer), e.g., II Chr. 2:10; Ezek. 45:10-11,14
 3. Hin (BDB 228), e.g., Exod. 29:40; Lev. 19:36; Ezek. 45:24
 4. Log (BDB 528), cf. Lev. 14:10,12,15,21,24
- C. Chart (taken from Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, p. 201 and *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 16, p. 379.

homer (dry) = kor (liquid)	1				
ephah (dry) = bath (liquid)	10	1			
se’ah (dry)	30	3	1		
hin (liquid)	60	6	2	1	
omer/issaron (dry)	100	10	-	-	1
qav/kab (dry)	180	18	6	3	- 1
og (liquid)	720	72	24	12	- 4 1

II. Weight terms used most often

A. The three most common weights are the talent, the shekel, and the gerah.

1. The largest weight in the OT is the talent. From Exod. 38:25-26 we learn that one talent equals 3,000 shekels (i.e., “Round weight,” BDB 503).
2. The term shekel (BDB 1053, “weight”) is used so often that it is assumed, but not stated in the text. There are several values of shekel mentioned in the OT.
 - a. “commercial standard” (NASB of Gen. 23:16)
 - b. “the shekel of the sanctuary” (NASB of Exod. 30:13)
 - c. “by the king’s weight” (NASB of II Sam. 14:26), also called “royal weight” in the Elephantine papyri.
3. The gerah (BDB 176 II) is valued at 20 per shekel (cf. Exod. 30:13). These ratios vary from Mesopotamia to Egypt. Israel followed the evaluation most common in Canaan (Ugarit)
4. The mina (BDB 584) is valued at either 50 or 60 shekels. This term is found mostly in later OT books (i.e., Ezek. 45:12; Ezra 2:69; Neh. 7:70-71). Ezekiel used the 60 to 1

ratio, while Canaan used the 50 to 1 ratio.

5. The beka (BDB 132, “half a shekel,” cf. Gen. 24:22) is used only twice in the OT (cf. Gen. 24:22; Exod. 38:26) and is valued at one-half a shekel. Its name means “to divide.”

B. Chart

1. Based on Exodus

talent	1		
mina	60	1	
shekel	3,000	50	1
beka	6,000*	100	1

*(gerah, also 6,000 from Exod. 30:13; Lev. 27:25; Num. 3:47; 18:16; Ezek. 45:12)

2. Based on Ezekiel

talent	1		
mina	60	1	
shekel	3,600	60	1
beka	7,200	120	2 1
gerah	72,000	1,200	20 10 1

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

It is obvious that deity manifests Himself physically in human form in the OT. The question for Trinitarians becomes which person of the Trinity fulfills this role. Since God the Father (YHWH) and His Spirit are consistently non-corporal, it seems possible to suggest that these human manifestations are the pre-incarnate Messiah.

To demonstrate the difficulties one faces in trying to identify a theophany from an angelic encounter the following list is illustrative:

1. the angel of the Lord as an angel

- a. Gen. 24:7,40
- b. Exod. 23:20-23; 32:34
- c. Num. 22:22
- d. Jdgs. 5:23
- e. II Sam. 24:16
- f. I Chr. 21:15-30
- g. Zech. 1:12-13

2. the angel of the Lord as theophany

- a. Gen. 16:7-13; 18:2,16,17-21,22-33; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16
- b. Exod. 3:2,4; 14:19 (13:21)
- c. Jdgs. 2:15; 6:22-24; 13:3-23
- d. Hosea 12:3-4

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANGELS AND THE DEMONIC

- A. Ancient peoples were animists. They attributed personality to forces of nature, animals, natural objects, and traits of human personality. Life is explained through the interaction of these spiritual entities with mankind.
- B. This personification became polytheism (many gods). Usually the demonic (*genii*) were lesser gods or demigods (good or evil) that impacted individual human lives.

- 1. Mesopotamia, chaos and conflict
- 2. Egypt, order and function
- 3. Canaan, see W. F. Albright's *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, Fifth Edition, pp. 67-92

- C. The OT does not dwell on or develop the subject of lesser gods, angels, or the demonic, probably because of its strict monotheism (cf. Exod. 8:10; 9:14; 15:11; Deut. 4:35,39; 6:4; 33:26; Ps. 35:10; 71:19; 86:6; Isa. 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7; Mic. 7:18). It does mention the false gods of the pagan nations (*Shedim*, cf. Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37) and it does name some of them.

- 1. *Se'im* (satyrs or hair demons, cf. Lev. 17:7; II Chr. 11:15)
- 2. *Lilith* (female, a seducing demon, cf. Isa. 34:14)
- 3. *Mavet* (Hebrew term for death used for Canaanite god of the underworld, *Mot*, cf. Isa. 28:15, 18; Jer. 9:21; and possibly Deut. 28:22)
- 4. *Resheph* (plague, cf. Deut. 33:29; Ps. 78:48; Hab. 3:5)
- 5. *Dever* (pestilence, cf. Ps. 91:5-6; Hab. 3:5)
- 6. *Az'azel* (name uncertain, but possibly a desert demon or place name, cf. Lev. 16:8,10,26)

(These examples are taken from *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 5, p. 1523.)
However, there is no dualism or angelic independence from YHWH in the OT.
Satan is a servant of YHWH (cf. Job 1-3; Zech. 3), not an enemy (cf. A. B. Davidson, *A Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 300-306).

- D. Judaism developed during the Babylonian exile (586-538 B.C.). It was theologically influenced by the Persian personified dualism of Zoroastrianism, a good high god called *Mazda* or *Ormazd* and an evil opponent called *Ahriman*. This allowed within post-exilic Judaism the personified dualism between YHWH and His angels and Satan and his angels or demons. Judaism's theology of personified evil is explained and documented well in Alfred Edersheim's *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendix XIII (pp. 749-863) and XVI (pp. 770-776). Judaism personified evil in three ways.

- 1. Satan or Sammael
- 2. the evil intent (*yetzer hara*) within mankind
- 3. the Death Angel

Edersheim characterizes these as (1) the Accuser; (2) the Tempter; and (3) the Punisher (vol. 2, p. 756). There is a marked theological difference between post-exilic Judaism and the NT presentation and explanation of evil.

- E. The NT, especially the Gospels, asserts the existence and opposition of evil spiritual beings to humanity and to YHWH (in Judaism Satan was an enemy to mankind, but not to God). They oppose God's

will, rule, and kingdom.

Jesus confronted and expelled these demonic beings, also called (1) unclean spirits (cf. Luke 4:36; 6:18) or (2) evil spirits (cf. Luke 7:21; 8:2). Jesus clearly made a distinction between illness (physical and mental) and the demonic. He demonstrated His power and spiritual insight by recognizing and exorcizing these evil spirits. They often recognized Him and attempted to address Him, but Jesus rejected their testimony, demanded their silence, and expelled them. Exorcisms are a sign of the defeat of Satan's kingdom.

There is a surprising lack of information in the NT Apostolic letters on this subject. Exorcism is never listed as a spiritual gift nor is a methodology or procedure for its use given for future generations of ministers or believers.

F. Evil is real; evil is personal; evil is present. Neither its origin nor purpose is revealed. The Bible asserts its reality and aggressively opposes its influence. There is no ultimate dualism in reality. God is in total control; evil is defeated and judged and will be removed from creation.

G. God's people must resist evil (cf. James 4:7). They cannot be controlled by it (cf. I John 5:18), but they can be tempted and their witness and influence damaged (cf. Eph. 6:10-18). Evil is a revealed part of the Christian's world-view. Modern Christians have no right to redefine evil (the demythologizing of Rudolf Bultmann); depersonalize evil (the social structures of Paul Tillich), nor attempt to explain it completely in psychological terms (Sigmund Freud). Its influence is pervasive, but defeated. Believers need to walk in the victory of Christ!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD DESCRIBED AS A HUMAN (anthropomorphic language)

I. Type of language is very common in the OT (some examples)

A. Physical body parts

1. eyes - Gen. 1:4,31; 6:8; Exod. 33:17; Num. 14:14; Deut. 11:12; Zech. 4:10
2. hands - Exod. 15:17; Num. 11:23; Deut. 2:15
3. arm - Exod. 6:6; 15:16; Num. 11:23; Deut. 4:34; 5:15
4. ears - Num. 11:18; I Sam. 8:21; II Kgs. 19:16; Ps. 5:1; 10:17; 18:6
5. face - Exod. 32:30; 33:11; Num. 6:25; Deut. 34:10; Ps. 114:7
6. finger - Exod. 8:19; 31:18; Deut. 9:10; Ps. 8:3
7. voice - Gen. 3:8,10; Exod. 15:26; 19:19; Deut. 26:17; 27:10
8. feet - Exod. 24:10; Ezek. 43:7
9. human form - Exod. 24:9-11; Ps. 47; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:26
10. the angel of the Lord - Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:4,13-21; 14:19; Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22

B. Physical actions

1. speaking as the mechanism of creation - Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26
2. walking (i.e., sound of) in Eden - Gen. 3:8; 18:33; Hab. 3:15
3. closing the door of Noah's ark - Gen. 7:16
4. smelling sacrifices - Gen. 8:21; Lev. 26:31; Amos 5:21
5. coming down - Gen. 11:5; 18:21; Exod. 3:8; 19:11,18,20
6. burying Moses - Deut. 34:6

C. Human emotions (some examples)

1. regret/repent - Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:29,35; Amos 7:3,6

2. anger - Exod. 4:14; 15:7; Num. 11:10; 12:9; 22:22; 25:3,4; 32:10,13,14; Deut. 6:5; 7:4; 29:20
3. jealousy - Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; 32:16,21; Josh. 24:19
4. loath/abhor - Lev. 20:23; 26:30; Deut. 32:19

D. Family terms (some examples)

1. Father

- a. of Israel - Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; 39:5
- b. of the king - II Sam. 7:11-16; Ps. 2:7
- c. metaphors of fatherly action - Deut. 1:31; 8:5; 32:1; Ps. 27:10; Pro. 3:12; Jer. 3:4,22; 31:20; Hosea 11:1-4; Mal. 3:17

2. Parent - Hosea 11:1-4

3. Mother - Ps. 27:10 (analogy to nursing mother); Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13

4. Young faithful lover - Hosea 1-3

II. Reasons for the use of this type of language

- A. It is a necessity for God to reveal Himself to human beings. The very pervasive concept of God as male is an anthropomorphism because God is spirit!
- B. God takes the most meaningful aspects of human life and uses them to reveal Himself to fallen humanity (father, mother, parent, lover)
- C. Though necessary, God does not want to be limited to any physical form (cf. Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5)
- D. The ultimate anthropomorphism is the incarnation of Jesus! God became physical, touchable (cf. I John 1:1-3). The message of God became the Word of God (cf. John 1:1-18).

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: FAITH (*PISTIS* [NOUN], *PISTEUŌ*, [VERB], *PISTOS* [ADJECTIVE])

- A. This is such an important term in the Bible (cf. Heb. 11:1,6). It is the subject of Jesus' early preaching (cf. Mark 1:15). There are at least two new covenant requirements: repentance and faith (cf. 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21).

B. Its etymology

1. The term "faith" in the OT meant loyalty, fidelity, or trustworthiness and was a description of God's nature, not ours.
2. It came from a Hebrew term (*emun*, *emunah*, BDB 53), which meant "to be sure or stable." Saving faith is mental assent (set of truths), moral living (a lifestyle), and primarily a relational (welcoming of a person) and volitional commitment (a decision) to that person.

C. Its OT usage

It must be emphasized that Abraham's faith was not in a future Messiah, but in God's promise that he would have a child and descendants (cf. Gen. 12:2; 15:2-5; 17:4-8; 18:14). Abraham responded to this promise by trusting in God. He still had doubts and problems about this promise, which took thirteen years to be fulfilled. His imperfect faith, however, was accepted by God. God is willing to work with flawed human beings who respond to Him and His promises in faith, even if it is the size of a mustard seed (cf. Matt. 17:20).

D. Its NT usage

The term “believed” is from the Greek term (*pisteuō*), which can also be translated “believe,” “faith,” or “trust.” For example, the NOUN does not occur in the Gospel of John, but the VERB is used often. In John 2:23-25 there is uncertainty as to the genuineness of the crowd’s commitment to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Other examples of this superficial use of the term “believe” are in John 8:31-59 and Acts 8:13, 18-24. True biblical faith is more than an initial response. It must be followed by a process of discipleship (cf. Matt. 13:20-22,31-32).

E. Its use with PREPOSITIONS

1. *Eis* means “into.” This unique construction emphasizes believers putting their trust/faith in Jesus:
 - a. into His name (John 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; I John 5:13)
 - b. into Him (John 2:11; 3:15,18; 4:39; 6:40; 7:5,31,39,48; 8:30; 9:36; 10:42; 11:45,48; 17:37,42; Matt. 18:6; Acts 10:43; Phil. 1:29; I Pet. 1:8)
 - c. into Me (John 6:35; 7:38; 11:25,26; 12:44,46; 14:1,12; 16:9; 17:20)
 - d. into the Son (John 3:36; 9:35; I John 5:10)
 - e. into Jesus (John 12:11; Acts 19:4; Gal. 2:16)
 - f. into Light (John 12:36)
 - g. into God (John 14:1)
2. *En* means “in” as in John 3:15; Mark 1:15; Acts 5:14
3. *Epi* means “in” or upon, as in Matt. 27:42; Acts 9:42; 11:17; 16:31; 22:19; Rom. 4:5,24; 9:33; 10:11; I Tim. 1:16; I Pet. 2:6
4. The DATIVE CASE with no PREPOSITION as in Gal. 3:6; Acts 18:8; 27:25; I John 3:23; 5:10
5. *Hoti*, which means “believe that,” gives content as to what to believe
 - a. Jesus is the Holy One of God (John 6:69)
 - b. Jesus is the I Am (John 8:24)
 - c. Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Him (John 10:38)
 - d. Jesus is the Messiah (John 11:27; 20:31)
 - e. Jesus is the Son of God (John 11:27; 20:31)
 - f. Jesus was sent by the Father (John 11:42; 17:8,21)
 - g. Jesus is one with the Father (John 14:10-11)
 - h. Jesus came from the Father (John 16:27,30)
 - i. Jesus identified Himself in the covenant name of the Father, “I Am” (John 8:24; 13:19)
 - j. We will live with Him (Rom. 6:8)
 - k. Jesus died and rose again (I Thess. 4:14)

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: BLAMELESS, INNOCENT, GUILTLESS, WITHOUT REPROACH

A. Opening Statements

1. This concept theologically describes mankind’s original state (i.e., Gen. 1, the Garden of Eden).
2. Sin and rebellion have decimated this condition of perfect fellowship (i.e., Gen. 3).

3. Humans (male and female) long for the restoration of fellowship with God because they are made in His image and likeness (i.e., Gen. 1:26-27).
4. God has dealt with sinful mankind in several ways
 - a. godly leaders (i.e., Abraham, Moses, Isaiah)
 - b. sacrificial system (i.e., Lev. 1-7)
 - c. godly examples (i.e., Noah, Job)
5. Ultimately God provided the Messiah
 - a. as full revelation of Himself
 - b. as the perfect sacrifice for sin
6. Christians are made blameless
 - a. legally through Christ's imputed righteousness
 - b. progressively through the work of the Spirit
 - c. the goal of Christianity is Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Eph. 1:4), which in reality, is the restoration of the image of God lost in the fall of Adam and Eve
7. Heaven is a restoration of the perfect fellowship of the Garden of Eden. Heaven is the New Jerusalem coming down out of God's presence (cf. Rev. 21:2) to a purified earth (cf. II Pet. 3:10). The Bible begins and ends on the same themes.
 - a. intimate, personal fellowship with God
 - b. in a garden setting (Gen. 1-2 and Rev. 21-22)
 - c. by prophetic statement, the presence and companionship of animals (cf. Isa. 11:6-9)

B. Old Testament

1. There are so many different Hebrew words that carry the concept of perfection, blamelessness, innocence that it would be hard to name and show all the intricate relationships.
2. The main terms carrying the concept of perfection, guiltlessness, or innocence (according to Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 94-99) are:
 - a. *shalom*
 - b. *thamam*
 - c. *calah*
3. The Septuagint (i.e., the Bible of the early church) translates many of these concepts into Koine Greek terms used in the NT.
4. The key concept is connected to the sacrificial system.
 - a. *amōmos* (cf. Exod. 29:1; Lev. 1:3,10; 3:1,6,9; Num. 6:14; Ps. 26:1,11)
 - b. *amiantos* and *aspilus* also have cultic connotations

C. New Testament

1. the legal concept
 - a. Hebrew legal cultic connotation is translated by *amōmos* (cf. Eph. 5:27; Phil. 2:15; I Pet. 1:19)

b. Greek legal connotation (cf. I Cor. 1:8; Col. 1:22)

2. Christ is the sinless, blameless, innocent One (*amōmos*) (cf. Heb. 9:14; I Pet. 1:19)
3. Christ's followers must emulate Him (*amōmos*) (cf. Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:22; II Pet. 3:14; Jude 24; Rev. 14:5)
4. This concept is also used of church leaders

a. *anegklētos*, "without accusation" (cf. I Tim. 3:10; Titus 1:6-7)

b. *anepileptos*, "above criticism" or "no handle for reproach" (cf. I Tim. 3:2; 5:7; 6:14; Titus 2:8)

5. The concept of "undefiled" (*amiantos*) is used of:

a. Christ Himself (cf. Heb. 7:26)

b. the Christian's inheritance (cf. I Pet. 1:4)

6. The concept of "wholeness" or "soundness" (*holoklēria*) (cf. Acts 3:16; I Thess. 5:23; James 1:4)

7. The concept of "without fault," guiltless innocence is conveyed by *amemptos* (cf. Luke 1:6; Phil. 2:15; 3:6; I Thess. 2:10; 3:13; 5:23)

8. The concept of "not subject to blame" is conveyed by *amōmētos* (cf. I Pet. 3:14)

9. The concept of "spotless," "unblemished" is often used in passages that have one of the above terms also (cf. I Tim. 6:14; James 1:27; I Pet. 1:19; II Pet. 3:14)

D. The number of words in Hebrew and Greek which convey this concept shows its importance. God has provided our need through Christ and now calls on us to be like Him.

Believers are positionally, forensically declared "right," "just," "blameless" by the work of Christ. Now believers are to possess their position. "Walk in the light as He is in the light" (cf. I John 1:7). "Walk worthy of the calling" (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15). Jesus has restored the image of God. Intimate fellowship is now possible, but remember God wants a people who reflect His character, as His Son did. We are called to nothing less than holiness (cf. Matt. 5:20,48; Eph. 1:4; I Pet. 1:13-16). God's holiness, not only legally, but existentially!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: BLESSING

There are several kinds of blessings (BDB 139) in the OT. The two most common are:

1. blessings of God:

a. to all nations through Abraham (and the Patriarchs), Gen. 12:3; 27:29; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8

b. conditioned on repentance, Exod. 32:29; Joel 2:12-14

c. conditioned on obedience to the covenant, Lev. 25:18-21

d. a proper relationship with God brings prosperity (i.e., the cursings vs. blessings), Deut. 11:26,27,29; 23:5; 28:2,8; 30:1,19; Josh. 8:34; Ps. 133:3; Pro. 10:22

e. on obedient Israel, Deut. 12:15; 16:17; 32:23; Isa. 44:3; Ezek. 34:25-31; Mal. 3:10-12

f. on Levitical priests, Ezek. 44:28-31; Mal. 3:10-12

g. on David and the Messianic line, II Sam. 7:29; Ps. 3:8; 21:3; 118:26 (cf. Matt. 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35; 19:38; John 12:13)

h. on the one who is sent by God, Ps. 118:26; 129:8

2. the blessing of parents:

- a. Isaac blessing Jacob (by trickery), Gen. 27:12,18-29,35
- b. Jacob, Gen. 49:3-27,28-29
- c. Moses (surrogate parent), Deut. 33:1-25

God's word, and for that matter, the spoken blessings of the Patriarchs, became an independent, self-directed power to accomplish its purpose, Isa. 55:11; 45:23; Matt. 24:35 (5:17-19); Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33. The power of the spoken word can be seen in:

- 1. creation (i.e., "He said. . .")
- 2. Messiah called "word," John 1:1,14; I John 1:1; Rev. 19:13

God's greatest blessing is Himself! His personal presence with, for us!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOASTING

These Greek terms *kauchaomai*, *kauchēma*, and *kauchēsis* are used about thirty-five times by Paul and only twice in the rest of the NT (both in James). Its predominate use is in I and II Corinthians.

There are two main truths connected to boasting.

- 1. No flesh shall glory/boast before God (cf. I Cor. 1:29; Eph. 2:9).
 - 2. Believers should glory in the Lord (cf. I Cor. 1:31; II Cor. 10:17, which is an allusion to Jer. 9:23-24).
- Therefore, there is appropriate and inappropriate boasting/glorying (i.e., pride).

1. appropriate

- a. in the hope of glory (cf. Rom. 4:2)
- b. in God through the Lord Jesus (cf. Rom. 5:11)
- c. in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ (i.e., Paul's main theme, cf. I Cor. 1:17-18; Gal. 6:14)
- d. Paul boasts in

- (1) his ministry without compensation (cf. I Cor. 9:15,16; II Cor. 10:12)
- (2) his authority from Christ (cf. II Cor. 10:8,12)
- (3) his not boasting in other men's labor (as some at Corinth were, cf. II Cor. 10:15)
- (4) his racial heritage (as others were doing at Corinth, cf. II Cor. 11:17; 12:1,5,6)
- (5) his churches
 - (a) Corinth (II Cor. 7:4,14; 8:24; 9:2; 11:10)
 - (b) Thessalonica (cf. II Thess. 1:4)
- (6) his confidence in God's comfort and deliverance (cf. II Cor. 1:12)

2. inappropriate

- a. in relation to Jewish heritage (cf. Rom. 2:17,23; 3:27; Gal. 6:13)
- b. some in the Corinthian church were boasting
 - (1) in men (cf. I Cor. 3:21)
 - (2) in wisdom (cf. I Cor. 4:7)
 - (3) in freedom (cf. I Cor. 5:6)
- c. false teachers tried to boast in the church at Corinth (cf. II Cor. 11:12)

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOB'S EVANGELICAL BIASES

I must admit to you the reader that I am biased at this point. My systematic theology is not Calvinism or Dispensationalism, but it is Great Commission evangelism. I believe God had an eternal plan for the redemption of all mankind (e.g., Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 18; 36:22-39; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; Rom. 3:9-18,19-20,21-32), all those created in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). The covenants are united in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28-29; Col. 3:11). Jesus is the mystery of God, hidden but now revealed (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13)!

This pre-understanding colors all my interpretations of Scripture (i.e., Jonah). I read all texts through it! It is surely a bias (all interpreters have them!), but it is a Scripturally-informed presupposition.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL'S GOD

1. Compassionate (BDB 933) - Exod. 34:6; Deut. 4:31; II Chr. 30:9; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; Neh. 9:17,31; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
2. Gracious (BDB 337) - Exod. 34:6; II Chr. 30:9; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; Neh. 9:17,31; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
3. Slow to anger (BDB74 CONSTRUCT BDB 60) - Exod. 34:6; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
4. Abounding in steadfast love (BDB 912 I CONSTRUCT BDB 338) - Exod. 34:6-7; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
5. Faithful (BDB 54) - Exod. 34:6; Ps. 86:15
6. Abundant forgiveness (BDB 699) - Neh. 9:17
7. Did not forsake them (BDB 736 I) - Neh. 9:17,31
8. Repents of evil (BDB 636, KB 688, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE + BDB 948) - Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
9. The great God (BDB 42, 152) - Neh. 1:5; 9:32
10. Great and terrible (BDB 152, 431) - Neh. 1:5; 4:14; 9:32
11. Keeps covenant (BDB 1036, 136) - Neh. 1:5; 9:32
12. Steadfast love (BDB 338 - Neh. 1:5; 9:32

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARIOTS

The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery notes that chariots were used in three distinct ways (p. 138):

1. Royal transportation
 - a. Egypt - Gen. 41:43; 50:9
 - b. Israel - II Sam. 15:1; I Kgs. 1:5; Song of Songs 3:9
2. Divine transportation and army - II Kgs. 2:11; 6:17; Ps. 68:17,104; Isa. 66:15; Jer. 17:25; Hab. 3:8
3. Military weapon (selected examples)
 - a. Egypt - Exod. 14:6,7,9,17,18,23,26,28; 15:4,9; Deut. 11:4; Josh. 24:6
 - b. Canaanite - Deut. 20:1; Josh. 11:4; 17:16,18; Jdgs. 1:19; 4-5
 - c. Philistine - Jdgs. 1:19; I Sam. 13:5; II Sam. 1:6
 - d. Israelite - I Sam. 8:11-12; II Sam. 15:1; I Kgs. 10:26-29
(note Ps. 20:1; Isa. 31:1)

The iron may have been around the wheels or simply ornamental. It represented a superior technology!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: *CHERUBIM*

A. One of several types of angelic beings. This particular type guarded sacred areas (cf. Exod. 25:18-22; I Kgs. 8:6-7).

B. Etymology is uncertain:

1. From Akkadian “intercessor” or “mediator” between God and man
2. From Hebrew this is a possible word play, “chariot” and cherub” (cf. Ezek. 1; 10)
3. Some say it means “brilliant appearance”

C. Physical form - This has been difficult to ascertain because of varying descriptions within the Bible and varying animal-human forms found in the ancient Near East. Some link them to:

1. Winged bull of Mesopotamia
2. Winged eagle - lions of Egypt called “griffins”
3. Winged creatures on Hiram, King of Tyres’ throne
4. Sphinx of Egypt and similar forms found in King Ahab’s ivory palace in Samaria

D. Physical Description

1. The form cherubim is linked with the Seraphim of Isaiah 6.
2. Examples of different forms

a. Number of faces

- (1) two – Ezek. 41:18
- (2) four – Ezek. 1:6, 10; 10:14,16,21,22
- (3) one – Rev. 4:7

b. Number of wings

- (1) two – I Kgs. 6:24
- (2) four – Ezek. 1:6,11; 2:23; 10:7,8-21
- (3) six (like Seraphim of Isa. 6:2) – Rev. 4:8

3. Other features

a. Human hands – Ezek. 1:8; 10:8,21

b. Legs

- (1) Straight, no knee – Ezek. 1:7
- (2) Calf feet – Ezek. 1:7

4. Flavius Josephus admits that no one knew what cherubim looked like (cf. *Antiquities of the Jews*, VIII:3:3).

E. Places and purpose found in the Bible

1. Guardian of the tree of life, Gen. 3:24 (possibly used metaphorically of Satan in Ezek. 28:14,16)

2. Guardian of the Tabernacle

- a. Over the Ark of the Covenant; Exod. 25:18-20; Num. 7:89; I Sam. 4:4
- b. Depicted on veil and curtains; Exod. 26:1,31; 36:8,35

3. Guardian of Solomon's Temple

- a. Two large carved cherubs in Holy of Holies; I Kgs. 6:23-28; 8:6-7; II Chron. 3:10-14; 5:7-9
- b. On walls of inner shrine; I Kgs. 6:29,35; II Chron. 3:7
- c. On panels that were associated with the several lavers; I Kgs. 7:27-39

4. Guardian of Ezekiel's Temple

- a. Carved on walls and doors; Ezek. 41:18-20, 25

5. Connected with transportation of deity

- a. possibly a metaphor for wind; II Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10; 104:3-4; Isa. 19:1
- b. guardian of God's throne; Ps.80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16
- c. guardian of God's portable throne chariot; Ezek. 1:4-28; 10:3-22; I Chron. 28:18

6. Herod's Temple

- a. Painted on walls (i.e. guardian cf. Talmud "Yoma" 54a)

7. Revelation throne scene (i.e. guardian cf. Rev. 4-5)

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: CONSEQUENCES OF IDOLATRY

A. "hearts are not deceived" - BDB 834, KB 984, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Job 31:27

- 1. "turn away" - BDB 693, KB 747, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Exod. 32:8; 9:12; 17:11,17; Jer. 5:23
- 2. "serve other gods" - BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 7:4,16; 8:19; 11:16; 13:6,13; 17:3; 28:14,36,64; 29:26; 30:17; 31:20; Josh. 23:16; 24:2,16; Jer. 11:10; 13:10; 16:11,13; 22:9; 25:6; 35:15
- 3. "to worship" - BDB 1005, KB 295, *Hithpael* (Owens, p. 805) and *Hishtaphel* (Parsing Guide, p. 146)

Obviously this was a recurrent tendency on Israel's part! The consequences for idolatry were severe.

B. "the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you" - BDB 354, KB 351, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Exod. 4:14; 22:24; 32:10; Num. 11:1,10; 12:9; 32:10; Deut. 6:15; 7:4; 11:17; 29:27; Josh. 23:11

- 1. "He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain." This is part of the curse for disobeying the covenant, cf. 28:24; II Chr. 6:26-28; 7:13
- 2. "the ground will not yield its fruit" - results of no rain

C. "you will perish quickly from the good land" - BDB 1, KB 2, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 4:26; 7:4; 8:19,20; 28:20,22; 30:18; Josh. 23:13,16

There is no middle option! God presents His covenant as fully compliant or in default. Fallen humanity cannot obtain this level of consistent or complete obedience (cf. Josh. 24:19). Therefore, there was/is a need for a new covenant based on God's mercy and His performance (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38; Rom. 3:9-18,23; Galatians 3)!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: CORNERSTONE

I. OT Usages

- A. The concept of a stone as a hard durable item which made a good foundation was used to describe YHWH (cf. Ps. 18:1).
- B. It then developed into a Messianic title (cf. Gen. 49:24; Ps. 118:22; Isa. 28:16).
- C. It came to represent a judgment from YHWH by the Messiah (cf. Isa. 8:14; Dan. 2:34-35,44-45).
- D. This developed into a building metaphor:
 - 1. a foundation stone, the first placed, which was secure and set the angles for the rest of the building, called "the cornerstone"
 - 2. it could also refer to the final stone put in place, which holds the walls together (cf. Zech. 4:7; Eph. 2:20,21), called "the cap stone" from the Hebrew *rush* (i.e., head)
 - 3. it could refer to the "key stone," which is in the center of the doorway arch and holds the weight of the entire wall

II. NT Usages

- A. Jesus quoted Ps. 118 several times in reference to Himself (cf. Matt. 21:41-46; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17)
 - B. Paul uses Ps. 118 in connection with YHWH's rejection of faithless, rebellious Israel (cf. Rom. 9:33)
 - C. Paul uses the concept of a "cap stone" in Eph. 2:20-22 in reference to Christ
 - D. Peter uses this concept of Jesus in I Pet. 2:1-10. Jesus is the cornerstone and believers are the living stones (i.e., believers as temples, cf. I Cor. 6:19), built on Him (i.e., Jesus is the new Temple, cf. Mark 14:58; Matt. 12:6; John 2:19-20).
- The Jews rejected the very foundation of their hope when they rejected Jesus as Messiah

III. Theological Statements

- A. YHWH allowed David/Solomon to build a temple. He told them that if they kept the covenant He would bless them and be with them, but if they did not the temple would be in ruins (cf. I Kgs. 9:1-9)!
- B. Rabbinical Judaism focused on form and ritual and neglected the personal aspect of faith (this is not a blanket statement; there were godly rabbis). God seeks a daily, personal, godly relationship with those created in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). Luke 20:17-18 contains frightening words of judgment.
- C. Jesus used the concept of a temple to represent His physical body. This continues and expands the concept of personal faith in Jesus as the Messiah as key to a relationship with YHWH.
- D. Salvation is meant to restore the image of God in human beings so that fellowship with God is possible. The goal of Christianity is Christlikeness now. Believers are to become living stones (i.e., little temples) built on/patterned after Christ.

E. Jesus is the foundation of our faith and the cap stone of our faith (i.e., the Alpha and Omega). Yet also the stone of stumbling and the rock of offense. To miss Him is to miss everything. There can be no middle ground here!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

The OT term *berith*, covenant, is not easy to define. There is no matching VERB in Hebrew. All attempts to derive an etymological definition have proved unconvincing. However, the obvious centrality of the concept has forced scholars to examine the word usage to attempt to determine its functional meaning.

Covenant is the means by which the one true God deals with His human creation. The concept of covenant, treaty, or agreement is crucial in understanding the biblical revelation. The tension between God's sovereignty and human free-will are clearly seen in the concept of covenant. Some covenants are based exclusively on God's character and actions

1. creation itself (cf. Gen. 1-2)
2. the call of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12)
3. the covenant with Abraham (cf. Gen. 15)
4. the preservation of and promise to Noah (cf. Gen. 6-9)

However, the very nature of covenant demands a response

1. by faith Adam must obey God and not eat of the tree in the midst of Eden
2. by faith Abraham must leave his family, follow God, and believe in future descendants
3. by faith Noah must build a huge boat far from water and gather the animals
4. by faith Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt and received specific guidelines for religious and social life with promises of blessings and cursings (cf. Deut. 27-29)

This same tension involving God's relationship to humanity is addressed in the "new covenant." The tension can be clearly seen in comparing Ezek. 18 with Ezek. 36:27-37. Is the covenant based on God's gracious actions or mandated human response? This is the burning issue of the Old Covenant and the New. The goals of both are the same: (1) the restoration of fellowship lost in Gen. 3 and (2) the establishment of a righteous people who reflect God's character.

The new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 solves the tension by removing human performance as the means of attaining acceptance. God's law becomes an internal desire instead of an external performance. The goal of a godly, righteous people remains the same, but the methodology changes. Fallen mankind proved themselves inadequate to be God's reflected image. The problem was not the covenant, but human sinfulness and weakness (cf. Rom. 7; Gal. 3).

The same tension between OT unconditional and conditional covenants remains in the NT. Salvation is absolutely free in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but it requires repentance and faith (both initially and continually). It is both a legal pronouncement and a call to Christlikeness, an indicative statement of acceptance and an imperative to holiness! Believers are not saved by their performance, but unto obedience (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Godly living becomes the evidence of salvation, not the means of salvation. This tension is clearly seen in Hebrews.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT PROMISES TO PATRIARCHS

This initial promise of a special covenant relationship was made to:

1. Abraham, Gen. 12:1-3
 - a. land, Gen. 12:7; 13:4-15; 15:18-21
 - b. people, Gen. 13:16; 15:4-5; 17:2-6; 22:18

c. blessing to the world, Gen. 18:18; 22:18

2. Isaac, Gen. 26:2-4

- a. land
- b. people
- c. blessing to the world

3. Jacob, Gen. 28:2-4,13; 35:9-12; 48:3-4

- a. land
- b. people

4. the nation of Israel (a land), Exod. 3:8,17; 6:8; 13:5; 33:1-3; Deut. 1:7-8,35; 4:31; 9:3; 11:25; 31:7; Josh. 1:6

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: CREMATION

I. OLD TESTAMENT

A. Cremation (burning) was one of the four ways to inflict capital punishment in Leviticus (cf. 20:14; 21:9, examples, Gen. 28:24 and Josh. 7:15,25).

B. People friendly with Saul, reclaimed his body and those of his three sons from the Philistines and burned them before burying their bones in the land of Benjamin (cf. I Sam. 31:12-13, omitted in the parallel of I Chr. 10:12)

There is some dispute among scholars about the reading “burned” vs. “anointed.” This text is the only seemingly positive cremation in the OT (cf. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 5, p. 1074). It may also refer to burning spices (cf. II Chr. 16:14; 21:19; Jer. 34:5).

C. Later, a Judean prophet predicts the burning of the priests at Bethel on its sacrificial altar (cf. I Kgs. 13:2).

D. The issue of cremation has sometimes been falsely linked to the OT use of fire as a metaphor for judgment (cf. Isa. 30:33). Cremation metaphors (i.e. “pyre”) are used to accentuate eschatological condemnation.

E. Burial was practiced by all of the countries of the ancient Near East (cf. Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, p. 57). Cremation was seen as a humiliation (cf. Amos 2:1).

II. GREECE AND ROME

A. Both of these civilizations practiced cremation.

- 1. Greece regularly (Sophocles, *Electra*, 1136-1139
- 2. Rome as a viable, but not common, option (Cicero, *Deleg* 2,22,56)

B. The cultures of the Mediterranean had a different attitude toward cremation than the cultures of the ancient Near East. Tacitus mentions that the Jews bury, not burn (*His*. 5.5)

III. RABBINICAL JUDAISM

C. Most early rabbis assert that burying is commanded by Deut. 21:23.

- D. Cremation is forbidden in the Talmud (*Sanh.* 7:2,24b) and *Mishna* ('*Abodiah Zarah* 1.3).
E. Modern Judaism allows those cremated to be placed in Jewish cemeteries (cf. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 5, p. 1074).

IV. NEW TESTAMENT

There is no discussion or mention of this subject in the NT. The physical body is viewed as a temporary shelter (cf. II Cor. 5). Something of the old body will be reunited with the believer at the Second Coming, but there are no details or explanations (cf. I Thess. 4:13-18). This is simply not an issue of “faith and practice” for Christians. Like the Jews of the OT, believers of the NT assert a bodily resurrection. There is a physicalness to eschatology, but the how or why is not specified! The condition or location of the physical remains do not affect a believer’s reunion with Jesus. Faith in Christ is the key, not physical remains!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: CUBIT

There are two cubits (BDB 52, KB 61) in the Bible. The regular cubit is the distance between an average man’s longest finger and his elbow, usually around 18 inches (e.g., Gen. 6:15; Exod. 25:10,17,23; 26:2,8,13,16; 27:1,9,12,13,14,16,18; Num. 35:4,5; Deut. 3:11). There is also a longer cubit (royal cubit) used in construction (i.e., Solomon’s temple), which was common in Egypt (i.e., 21 fingers), Palestine (i.e., 24 fingers), and sometimes Babylon (i.e., 30 fingers). It was 21 inches long (cf. Ezek. 40:5; 43:13).

The ancients used parts of the human body for measurement. The people of the ancient Near East used:

1. length from elbow to middle finger (cubit)
2. width from outstretched thumb to little finger (span, cf. Exod. 28:16; 39:9; I Sam. 17:4)
3. length between all four fingers of a closed hand (handbreadth, cf. Exod. 25:25; 37:12; I Kgs. 7:26; II Chr. 4:5)
4. length of middle joint of finger (fingerbreadth, Jer. 52:21)

The cubit (BDB 52, KB 61) was not completely standardized, but there were two basic lengths.

1. normal male’s elbow to middle finger (about 18 inches, cf. Deut. 3:11)
2. royal cubit was a bit longer (about 20 inches, cf. II Chr. 3:3; Ezek. 40:5; 43:13)

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: CURSE

The Hebrew term “accursed” (BDB 887, KB 1105) is used in two senses:

1. the curses of people against people (common in the ancient world) - Jdgs. 9:57; II Sam. 16:12; I Kgs. 2:8; Ps. 109:17-18; Pro. 27:14
2. the opposite of divine blessing
 - a. patriarchal - Gen. 27:12,33
 - b. YHWH - Deut. 11:26,28; 21:23; 23:5; 28:15,45; 30:1; Josh. 8:34; II Kgs. 22:19; Jer. 24:9; 25:18; 26:6; Zech. 8:13 (related to covenant obedience)

The key text theologically is Deut. 11:26,28. This sets the volitional stage for the consequences of covenant disobedience to become a reality. YHWH desires all peoples to know and honor Him so that He can bless and prosper them on the earth. However, disobedience results in the lack of even the taking away of physical blessing. These

blessings are always related to an intimate, personal, and obedient relationship with God.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: DATE OF THE EXODUS

A. There have been two scholarly opinions on the date of the Exodus:

1. from I Kings 6:1, which says, “480 years from the Exodus to the building of Solomon’s Temple”:

- a. Solomon began to reign in 970 B.C. This is figured by using the battle of *Qarqar* (853 B.C.) as a certain starting date.
- b. The Temple was built in his fourth year (965 B.C.), and the Exodus occurred about 1445/6 B.C.

2. This would make it occur in the 18th Egyptian Dynasty.

- a. The Pharaoh of the oppression would be *Thutmose III* (1490-1436 B.C.).
- b. The Pharaoh of the Exodus would be *Amenhotep II* (1436-1407 B.C.).

(1) Some believe evidence from Jericho based on the fact that no diplomatic correspondence occurred between Jericho and Egypt during the reign of *Amenhotep III* (1413-1377 B.C.).

(2) The *Amarna* texts record diplomatic correspondence written on ostraca about the *Habiru* over-running the land of Canaan in the reign of *Amenhotep III*. Therefore, the Exodus occurred in the reign of *Amenhotep II*.

(3) The period of the Judges is not long enough if the 13th century is the date of Exodus.

3. The possible problems with these dates are:

- a. The Septuagint (LXX) has 440 years not 480.
- b. It is possible that 480 years is representative of 12 generations of 40 years each, therefore, a figurative number.
- c. There are 12 generations of priests from Aaron to Solomon (cf. I Chr. 6), then 12 from Solomon to the Second Temple. The Jews, like the Greeks, reckoned a generation as forty years. So, there is a 480 year period back and forward (symbolic use of numbers) (cf. Bimson’s *Redating the Exodus and Conquest*).

4. There are three other texts that mention dates:

- a. Genesis 15:13,16 (cf. Acts 7:6), 400 years of bondage;
- b. Exodus 12:40-41 (cf. Gal. 3:17);

(1) MT - 430 years of sojourn in Egypt

(2) LXX - 215 years of sojourn in Egypt

- c. Judges 11:26 - 300 years between Jephthah’s day and the conquest (supports

1445 date)

d. Acts 13:19, exodus, wanderings and conquest - 450 years

5. The author of Kings used specific historical references and did not round numbers (Edwin Thiele, *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*, pp. 83-85

B. The tentative evidence from archaeology seems to point toward a date of 1290 B.C., or the 19th Egyptian Dynasty.

1. Joseph was able to visit his father and Pharaoh in this same day. The first native Pharaoh who began to move the capital of Egypt from Thebes back to the Nile Delta, to a place called *Avaris/Zoan/Tanis* which was the old Hyksos capital, was *Seti I* (1309-1290). He would be the Pharaoh of the oppression.

a. This seems to fit two pieces of information about the Hyksos reign of Egypt.

(1) A stele has been found from the time of Rameses II that commemorates the founding of Avaris four hundred years earlier (1700's B.C. by the Hyksos)

(2) The prophecy of Gen. 15:13 speaks of a 400 year oppression

b. This implies that Joseph's rise to power was under a *Hyksos* (Semitic) Pharaoh. The new Egyptian dynasty is referred to in Exod. 1:8.

2. The *Hyksos*, an Egyptian word meaning "rulers of foreign lands," who were a group of non-Egyptian Semitic rulers, controlled Egypt during the 15th and 16th Dynasties (1720-1570 B.C.). Some want to relate them to Joseph's rise to power. If we subtract the 430 years of Exod. 12:40 from 1720 B.C., we get a date of about 1290 B.C.

3. Seti I's son was Rameses II (1290-1224). This name is mentioned as one of the store cities built by the Hebrew slaves, Exod. 1:11. Also this same district in Egypt near Goshen is called Rameses, Gen. 47:11. *Avaris/Zoan/Tanis* was known as "House of Rameses" from 1300-1100 B.C.

4. Thutmose III was known as a great builder, as was Rameses II.

5. Rameses II had 47 daughters living in separate palaces.

6. Archaeology has shown that most of the large walled cities of Canaan (Hazor, Debir, Lachish) were destroyed and rapidly rebuilt around 1250 B.C. In allowing for a 38 year wilderness wandering period this fits a date of 1290 B.C.

7. Archaeology has found a reference to the Israelites being in southern Canaan on a memorial stele of Rameses' successor *Merneptah* (1224-1214 B.C. [cf. The Stele of Merneptah, dated 1220 B.C.]).

8. Edom and Moab seem to have attained strong national identity in the late 1300's B.C. These countries were not organized in the 15th century (Glueck).

9. The book entitled *Redating the Exodus and Conquest* by John J. Bimson, published by the University of Sheffield, 1978, argues against all of the archaeological evidence for an early date.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DEATH PENALTY IN ISRAEL

Ancient Israel was to reflect the character of YHWH to the world (cf. Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Exod. 19:5-6). When

intentional covenant rebellion distorted this missionary purpose, serious consequences manifested (i.e., death penalty).

The Pentateuch lists several categories:

1. sins against YHWH

- a. Canaanite worship practices - Exod. 22:18; Lev. 20:2-3,27; Deut. 18:10-11
- b. idolatry (heavenly hosts) - Exod. 22:20; Deut. 17:2-7
- c. blasphemy - Exod. 22:28; Lev. 24:15-16
- d. false prophecy - Deut. 13:1-11; 18:20-22
- e. Sabbath violations - Exod. 31:14-15; 35:2

2. sexual sins

- a. incest - Lev. 20:11-21
- b. fornication - Lev. 19:29; 21:19; Deut. 22:13-21; 23:17-18
- c. adultery - Exod. 20:14; Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:23-24
- d. sodomy - Lev. 18:22; 20:13
- e. bestiality - Exod. 22:19; Lev. 20:15-16

3. violation of covenant regulations against fellow Israelites

- a. murder - Exod. 20:13; 21:12-14; Lev. 24:17; Num. 35:16-21; Deut. 5:17
- b. kidnaping (to sell) - Exod. 21:16; Deut. 24:7 and possibly Exod. 20:15; Deut. 5:19
- c. rebellion against parents - Deut. 21:18-21
- d. false witness
- e. taking holy war spoils - Joshua 7

The methods of execution also varied:

- 1. stoning - most common
- 2. burning - Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9
- 3. hanging/impaling - Deut. 21:22-23
- 4. sword - Deut. 13:15

Exceptions for special cases:

- 1. cities of refuge and subsequent trial - Joshua 20
- 2. stringent investigations of accusations - Deut. 13:15; 17:4; 19:18
- 3. need for two witnesses - Num. 35:36; Deut. 17:6; 19:15

The death penalty was to be:

- 1. a way to cleanse the land - Deut. 13:5; 17:12; 19:13,19; 21:9,21; 22:21,22,24; 24:7
- 2. a deterrent to others - Deut. 17:13; 19:20; 21:21
- 3. a way of stopping clan violence (i.e., no personal revenge, except regulations set for blood-avenger) See *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, pp. 147-163).

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: The Deity of Christ from the OT

The two lines from Micah 5:2, “His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity,” are parallel. The VERB, going forth (BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is a very common VERB. It was used in Micah eight times (e.g., [1] of the Lord coming in 1:3; [2] of God’s law going forth in 4:2; and [3] of repentant Israel being restored in 7:9 [a new exodus, 7:15]). It can refer to the Messiah’s origin (NRSV, NJB) or actions (cf. vv. 4 and 5a).

These two lines could refer to:

1. the pre-existence of the Messiah (cf. Prov. 8:22-31; John 1:1,14-15; 8:56-59; 16:28; 17:5; I Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6-7; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; 10:5-8)
2. a way of referring to famous descendants of the past (i.e., Abraham, Noah, or more probably, David).

This whole verse alludes to a Davidic king, of David's line, from David's hometown. David was viewed as the ideal king.

The term "eternity" (BDB 761) is *'olam*. See Special Topic: Forever (*'Olam*) at Hosea 2:19.

The NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 347, which discusses *'olam*, makes this comment,

"While it is tempting to see here a reference to the eternal preexistence of the Messiah, no such an idea is found in biblical or post-biblical Jewish literature before the 'Similitudes of Enoch' (first century B.C. - first century A.D.; see I Enoch 48:2-6.)"

I think, although there are hints in the OT of an incarnation, the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day were surprised at His claims of equality with God (e.g., Mark 2:5-7; John 1:1-14; 8:58 and Paul, II Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; Phil. 2:6; Titus 2:13). A partial list of OT texts that have been used to assert the full deity of Jesus follows:

1. Ps. 2:7, quoted in Heb. 1:5 (see esp. 1:2-3)
2. Ps. 45:6-7 quoted in Heb. 1:8-9
3. Ps. 110:1 quoted in Heb. 1:13
4. Isa. 9:6; Jer. 23:5-6; Micah 5:2 alluded to in Luke 1:32
5. Dan. 7:13 quoted in Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62
6. Zech. 13:7 quoted in Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27
7. Mal. 3:1 quoted in Mark 1:1-3; Luke 2:26-27

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: DEGREES OF REWARDS AND PUNISHMENT

A. Appropriate and inappropriate response to God is based on knowledge. The less knowledge one has the less responsible one is. The opposite is also true.

B. Knowledge of God comes in two basic ways.

1. creation (cf. Psalm 19; Romans 1-2)
2. Scripture (cf. Psalm 19, 119; the gospel)

C. OT evidence

1. rewards

- a. Gen. 15:1 (usually associated with earthly reward, land and sons)
- b. Deuteronomy 27-28 (covenant obedience brings blessing)
- c. Dan. 12:3

2. punishment

- a. Deuteronomy 27-28 (covenant disobedience brings cursing)

3. The OT pattern of reward for personal, covenantal righteousness is modified because of human sin. This modification is seen in Job and Psalm 73. The NT changes the focus from this world to the next (of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7).

D. NT evidence

1. rewards (beyond salvation)

- a. Mark 9:41
- b. Matt. 5:12,46; 6:1-4,5-6,6-18; 10:41-42; 16:27; 25:14-23
- c. Luke 6:23,35; 19:11-19,25-26

2. punishment

- a. Mark 12:38-40
- b. Luke 10:12; 12:47-48; 19:20-24; 20:47
- c. Matthew 5:22,29,30; 7:19; 10:15,28; 11:22-24; 13:49-50; 18:6; 25:14-30
- d. James 3:1

E. For me the only analogy that makes sense is from the opera. I do not attend opera presentations so I do not understand them. The more I knew of the difficulty and intricateness of the plot, music, and dance the more I would appreciate the performance. I believe heaven will fill our cups, but I think our earthly service determines the size of the cup.

Therefore, knowledge and a response to that knowledge results in rewards and punishments (cf. Matt. 16:7; I Cor. 3:8,14; 9:17,18; Gal. 6:7; II Tim. 4:14). There is a spiritual principle—we reap what we sow! Some sow more and reap more (cf. Matt. 13:8,23).

F. “The crown of righteousness” is ours in the finished work of Jesus Christ (cf. II Tim. 4:8), but notice, “the crown of life” is connected to perseverance under trial (cf. James 1:12; Rev. 2:10; 3:10-11). The “crown of glory” for Christian leaders is connected to their lifestyle (cf. I Pet. 5:1-4). Paul knows he has an imperishable crown, but he exercises extreme self-control (cf. I Cor. 9:24-27).

The mystery of the Christian life is that the gospel is absolutely free in the finished work of Christ, but as we must respond to God’s offer in Christ, we must also respond to God’s empowerment for Christian living. The Christian life is as supernatural as is salvation, yet we must receive it and hold on to it. The free-and-cost-everything paradox is the mystery of rewards and sowing/reaping.

We are not saved by good works, but for good works (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Good works are the evidence that we have met Him (cf. Matt. 7.) Human merit in the area of salvation leads to destruction, but godly living which results from salvation is rewarded.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DEMONIC IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

A. The exact relationship between fallen angels and the demonic is uncertain. I Enoch asserts that the *Nephilim* of Gen. 6:1-8 is the source of evil (the rabbis also focus on the text and not Genesis 3). I Enoch says that these half angel/half human beings were killed by the flood (it even asserts that their death was the purpose of the flood), but now their disembodied spirits are seeking a body host.

B. There are several hostile spirits or demons named in the OT:

1. *Satyrs* or “hairy ones,” possibly goat demons (BDB 972 III) - Lev. 17:7; II Chr. 11:15; Isa. 13:21; 34:14
2. *Shedim* (BDB 993) - Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37, to which sacrifices were made (similar to *Molech*)
3. *Lilith*, the female night demon (BDB 539) - Isa. 34:14 (part of Babylonian and Ugaritic myth)
4. *Azazel*, demon of the desert (name of chief demon in I Enoch, cf. 8:1; 9:6; 10:4-8; 13:1-2; 54:5; 55:4; 69:2) - Lev. 16:8,10,26

5. Psalm 91:5-6 are personifications of pestilence (cf. v. 10), not spiritual beings (cf. Song of Songs 3:8)
6. Isaiah 13:21 and 34:14 list several desert animals as a way to show the desolation of destroyed places. Some who assume that the list includes the demonic to illustrate that these destroyed places are also haunted (cf. Matt. 12:43; Luke 11:24; Rev. 18:2)

C. The OT monotheism silenced and modified the legends of the pagan nations, but sometimes names and titles of their superstitions are referred to (esp. poetic texts). The reality of evil spirits is a part of progressive revelation and is developed in the NT as is the person/angel of Satan.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE

Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool or means of others' redemption! In the Old Testament the term was used primarily for service; in the New Testament it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God's sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind's necessary response (cf. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in Eph. 1:4. Jesus is God's elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind's need (Karl Barth). Eph. 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven, but holiness (Christlikeness). We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God's call (election) is for time as well as eternity!

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths:

1. Predestination vs. human free will
2. Security of the believers vs. the need for perseverance
3. Original sin vs. volitional sin
4. Sinlessness (perfectionism) vs. sinning less
5. Initial instantaneous justification and sanctification vs. progressive sanctification
6. Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility
7. God's transcendence vs. God's immanence
8. God as ultimately unknowable vs. God as knowable in Scripture
9. The Kingdom of God as present vs. future consummation
10. Repentance as a gift of God vs. repentance as a necessary human covenantal response
11. Jesus as divine vs. Jesus as human
12. Jesus is equal to the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father

The theological concept of "covenant" unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant, faith response from humans. Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: FAITH (*PISTIS* [NOUN], *PISTEUŌ*, [VERB], *PISTOS* [ADJECTIVE])

- A. This is such an important term in the Bible (cf. Heb. 11:1,6). It is the subject of Jesus' early preaching (cf. Mark 1:15). There are at least two new covenant requirements: repentance and faith (cf. 1:15;

Acts 3:16,19; 20:21).

B. Its etymology

1. The term “faith” in the OT meant loyalty, fidelity, or trustworthiness and was a description of God’s nature, not ours.
2. It came from a Hebrew term (emun, emunah, BDB 53), which meant “to be sure or stable.” Saving faith is mental assent (set of truths), moral living (a lifestyle), and primarily a relational (welcoming of a person) and volitional commitment (a decision) to that person.

C. Its OT usage

It must be emphasized that Abraham’s faith was not in a future Messiah, but in God’s promise that he would have a child and descendants (cf. Gen. 12:2; 15:2-5; 17:4-8; 18:14). Abraham responded to this promise by trusting in God. He still had doubts and problems about this promise, which took thirteen years to be fulfilled. His imperfect faith, however, was accepted by God. God is willing to work with flawed human beings who respond to Him and His promises in faith, even if it is the size of a mustard seed (cf. Matt. 17:20).

D. Its NT usage

The term “believed” is from the Greek term (*pisteuō*) which can also be translated “believe,” “faith,” or “trust.” For example, the NOUN does not occur in the Gospel of John, but the VERB is used often. In John 2:23-25 there is uncertainty as to the genuineness of the crowd’s commitment to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Other examples of this superficial use of the term “believe” are in John 8:31-59 and Acts 8:13, 18-24. True biblical faith is more than an initial response. It must be followed by a process of discipleship (cf. Matt. 13:20-22,31-32).

E. Its use with PREPOSITIONS

1. *eis* means “into.” This unique construction emphasizes believers putting their trust/faith in Jesus:
 - a. into His name (John 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; I John 5:13)
 - b. into Him (John 2:11; 3:15,18; 4:39; 6:40; 7:5,31,39,48; 8:30; 9:36; 10:42; 11:45,48; 17:37,42; Matt. 18:6; Acts 10:43; Phil. 1:29; I Pet. 1:8)
 - c. into Me (John 6:35; 7:38; 11:25,26; 12:44,46; 14:1,12; 16:9; 17:20)
 - d. into the Son (John 3:36; 9:35; I John 5:10)
 - e. into Jesus (John 12:11; Acts 19:4; Gal. 2:16)
 - f. into Light (John 12:36)
 - g. into God (John 14:1)
2. *en* means “in” as in John 3:15; Mark 1:15; Acts 5:14
3. *epi* means “in” or upon, as in Matt. 27:42; Acts 9:42; 11:17; 16:31; 22:19; Rom. 4:5,24; 9:33; 10:11; I Tim. 1:16; I Pet. 2:6
4. the DATIVE CASE with NO PREPOSITION as in Gal. 3:6; Acts 18:8; 27:25; I John 3:23; 5:10
5. *hoti*, which means “believe that,” gives content as to what to believe
 - a. Jesus is the Holy One of God (John 6:69)
 - b. Jesus is the I Am (John 8:24)
 - c. Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Him (John 10:38)
 - d. Jesus is the Messiah (John 11:27; 20:31)
 - e. Jesus is the Son of God (John 11:27; 20:31)

- f. Jesus was sent by the Father (John 11:42; 17:8,21)
- g. Jesus is one with the Father (John 14:10-11)
- h. Jesus came from the Father (John 16:27,30)
- i. Jesus identified Himself in the covenant name of the Father, “I Am” (John 8:24; 13:19)
- j. We will live with Him (Rom. 6:8)
- k. Jesus died and rose again (I Thess. 4:14)

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: “THE FAITHFUL REMNANT”

The OT concept of “a faithful remnant” is a recurrent theme of the Prophets (mostly in the eighth century prophets and Jeremiah). It is used in three senses:

1. those who survived the Exile (e.g., Isa. 10:20-23; 17:4-6; 37:31-32; Jer. 42:15,19; 44:12,14,28; Amos 1:8)
2. those who remain faithful to YHWH (e.g., Isa. 4:1-5; 11:11,16; 28:5; Joel 2:32; Amos 5:14-15; Micah 2:12-13; 4:6-7; 5:7-9; 7:18-20)
3. those who are a part of the eschatological renewal and recreation (e.g., Amos 9:11-15)

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT ON THE FALL

1. The Fall affected all mankind as clearly expressed in Paul’s discussion of Rom. 5:12-21.

Romans 5:12-21 is a discussion of Jesus as the second Adam (cf. I Cor. 15:21-22, 45-49; Phil. 2:6-8). It gives emphasis to the theological concept of both individual sin and corporate guilt.

Paul’s development of mankind’s (and creation’s) fall in Adam was unique and different from the rabbis while his view of corporality was very much in line with rabbinical teaching. It showed Paul’s ability under inspiration to use, or supplement, the truths he was taught during his training in Jerusalem under Gamaliel (cf. Acts 22:3).

The doctrine of original sin from Gen. 3 was developed by Augustine and Calvin. It asserts that humans are born sinful. Often Psalm 51:5; 58:3; and Job 15:14; 25:4 are used as OT proof-texts. The alternate theological position that humans are morally and spiritually responsible for their own choices and destiny was developed first by the rabbis and then in the church by Pelagius and Arminius. There is some evidence for their view in Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:15; and Jonah 4:11; John 9:41; 15:22,24; Acts 17:30; Rom. 4:15. The thrust of this theological position would be that children are innocent until an age of moral responsibility (for the rabbis this was 13 years old for boys and 12 years old for girls).

There is a mediating position in which both an innate evil propensity and an age of moral responsibility are both true! Evil is not only corporate, but a developing evil of self and sin (life apart from God). The wickedness of humanity is not the issue (cf. Gen. 6:5,11-12,13; Rom. 3:9-18,23), but the when, at birth or later in life?

2. “A new heaven and a new earth” become the NT eschatological theme.

“A new heaven and a new earth.” This Greek term for “new,” *kainos*, emphasizes quality, not chronological time (cf. 2:17; 3:12; 5:9; 14:3; 21:1,2,5). This was an OT theme, a recreated earth (cf. Isa. 11:6-9; 65:17; 66:22; Rom. 8:18-25; II Pet. 3:10,12). All believers are citizens of this new Kingdom (cf. Phil. 3:20; Eph. 2:19; Heb. 12:23) and share this new creation (cf. II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 4:24). A parallel theological concept would be the “city of God not made with human hands” of Heb. 11:10,16; 12:22; 13:14.

The new creation will be like the initial creation. Heaven will be a restored Garden of Eden. God, mankind, the animals, and all natural creation will fellowship and rejoice again! The Bible begins

with God, mankind and the animals in perfect fellowship in a garden (cf. Gen. 1-2). The Bible ends with God and mankind in a garden setting (cf. Rev. 21-22) and by prophetic implication, the animals (cf. Isa. 11:6-8; 65:25). Believers are not going to heaven; the new Jerusalem is coming down out of heaven (cf. Rev. 21:2) and coming to a recreated and cleansed earth. God and mankind are together again (cf. Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14; 8:8,10; Rev. 21:3).

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHERHOOD OF GOD

I. Old Testament

A. There is a sense that God is father by means of creation:

1. Gen. 1:26-27
2. Mal. 2:10
3. Acts 17:28

B. Father is an analogy used in several senses:

1. father of Israel (by election)

- a. “Son” - Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; 39:5; Isa. 1:2; 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:19; 31:20; Hosea 1:10; 11:1; Mal. 1:6
- b. “firstborn” - Exod. 4:22; Jer. 31:9

2. father of the king of Israel (Messianic)

- a. II Sam. 7:11-16
- b. Ps. 2:7; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5
- c. Hosea 11:1; Matt. 2:15

3. analogy of loving parent

a. father (metaphor)

- (1) carries his son - Deut. 1:31
- (2) disciplines - Deut. 8:5; Pro. 3:12
- (3) provision (i.e., Exodus) - Deut. 32:1
- (4) will never forsake - Ps. 27:10
- (5) loves - Ps. 103:13
- (6) friend/guide - Jer. 3:4
- (7) healer/forgiver - Jer. 3:22
- (8) mercy giver - Jer. 31:20
- (9) trainer - Hosea 11:1-4
- (10) special son - Mal. 3:17

b. mother (metaphor)

- (1) will never forsake - Ps. 27:10
- (2) love of a nursing mother - Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13 and Hosea 11:4 (with the proposed textual emendation of “yoke” to “infant”)

II. New Testament

A. The Trinity (texts where all three are mentioned)

1. Gospels

- a. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19
- b. John 14:26

2. Paul

- a. Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
- b. I Cor. 2:8-10; 12:4-6
- c. II Cor. 1:21; 13:14
- d. Gal. 4:4-6
- e. Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-
- f. I Thess. 1:2-5
- g. II Thess. 2:13
- h. Titus 3:4-6

3. Peter - I Pet. 1:2

4. Jude - vv. 20-21

B. Jesus

- 1. Jesus as “only begotten” - John 1:18; 3:16,18; I John 4:9
- 2. Jesus as “Son of God” - Matt. 4:3; 14:33; 16:16; Luke 1:32,35; John 1:34,49; 6:69; 11:27
- 3. Jesus as Beloved Son - Matt. 3:17; 17:5
- 4. Jesus’ use of *abba* for God - Mark 14:36
- 5. Jesus’ use of PRONOUNS to show both His and our relationship to God
 - a. “My Father,” e.g., John 5:18; 10:30,33; 19:7; 20:17
 - b. “your Father,” e.g., Matt. 17:24-27
 - c. “our Father,” e.g., Matt. 6:9,14,26

C. One of many family metaphors to describe the intimate relationship between God and humankind:

1. God as Father

2. Believers as:

- a. sons of God
- b. children
- c. born of God
- d. born again
- e. adopted
- f. brought forth
- g. family of God

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

I. Mosaic Annual Feasts (cf. Exod. 23:14-17; Lev. 23; Num 28; Deut. 16)

A. All male Jews were required to attend three annual feasts (cf. Exod. 23:14,17; 34:23) if possible.

B. These feasts had agricultural, as well as national significance.

C. Each was a day of rest, worship, and community fellowship.

D. The three required annual feasts

1. Passover (cf. Exod. 12:1-14,21-28; Lev. 23:4-14; Num. 28:16-25; Deut. 16:1-8)

a. thanksgiving and dedication of the barley harvest

b. commemorates the Exodus

c. it was followed by an eight day Feast of Unleavened Bread (cf. Exod. 12:15-20; 34:18-20)

2. Pentecost (Feast of Weeks, cf. Exod. 23:16; 34:22)

a. thanksgiving and dedication of the wheat harvest

b. commemorates the giving of the Torah to Moses on Mt. Sinai by rabbinical reckoning

c. See Lev. 23:15-21; Num. 28:26-31

3. Tabernacles/Booths/Huts (Succoth)

a. thanksgiving for the general harvest

b. commemorates the beginning of the wilderness wandering period

c. see Exod. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:34-44; Deut. 16:13-17

d. it was followed by an eight day feast (cf. Lev. 23:36; Num. 29:35-38)

E. Other annual feasts

1. New Year Celebration (Rosh Hashanah)

a. see Lev. 23:23-25; Num. 29:1-6

b. this day of rest and sacrifice was held on the first day of Tishri

c. the feast aspect of this day, so common in the NT era, is unspecified in the Torah

2. Day of Atonement - “day of covering” or Yom Kippur (the only fast day)

a. a day of rest, fasting, and repentance

b. a ritual for the removal of corporate uncleanness (tabernacle, priests, and people)

c. see Exod. 30:10; Lev. 16; 23:26-32; 25:9; Num. 29:7-11

d. it is difficult to pin down when this feast was re-instituted after the Exile

II. Other Mosaic Feast Days

A. the Sabbath

1. weekly day of rest and worship
2. see Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 16:22-30; 20:8-11; 23:12; 31:12-16; Lev. 23:1-3; Num. 28:9-10

B. Sabbath Year

1. every seventh year the land rested (no sowing)
2. see Exod. 23:10-11; Lev. 25:1-7; Deut. 15:1
3. it signified that YHWH owned the land and gave it to Israel
4. all slaves were set free (cf. Exod. 21:2-6) and all debts were forgiven (cf. Deut. 15:1-6)

C. Jubilee Year

1. every seventh Sabbath year (i.e., 50th year)
2. see Lev. 25:8-18; 27:17-24
3. release of debt and returning of land, freeing of slaves (cf. Lev. 25:10,13, very similar to Sabbath Year)
4. its inauguration is never recorded

D. New Moon

1. special offerings and a day of rest
2. see Num. 10:10; 28:11-15
3. possibly commemorated the setting up of the tabernacle (cf. Exod. 40:2,17)
4. Jewish calendar is based on lunar cycles

III. These rituals and regulations show a development over time. These feasts and fasts may have had a beginning in pagan calendars, but developed into uniquely Jewish praise and devotion to YHWH. Nature (seasonal), agricultural (planting, rain, and harvest), and national events (Exodus, giving of the Law, etc.) combined to highlight certain times of the year for worship.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: FERTILITY WORSHIP OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

I. Reasons For

- A. Ancient humans began as a hunter-gatherers, but as nomadic life became settled, the need for crops and herds developed.
- B. Ancient Near Eastern inhabitants were vulnerable to the forces of nature. As civilizations developed around the major bodies of fresh water they became dependant on the regular order of the seasons.
- C. The forces of nature became gods who needed to be supplicated and controlled.

II. Where and Why

A. Fertility religions developed in

1. Egypt (Nile)
2. Mesopotamia (Tigris and Euphrates)
3. Canaan (Jordan)

B. There is a basic commonality among the fertility cults of the ancient Near East.

- C. The changing and unpredictable seasons and weather conditions caused the development of myths using human/divine analogies as the basis of life in the spiritual realm and on earth.

III. Who and How

A. Who (the gods and goddesses)

1. Egypt

- a. Isis (female)
- b. Osiris (male)

2. Mesopotamia

- a. Ishtar/Inanna (female)
- b. Tammuz/Dumuzi (male)

3. Canaan

- a. Ba'al (male)
- b. Asherah, Astarte, Anath (female)

B. Each of these pairs were mythologized in similar ways.

- 1. one dies
- 2. the other restores
- 3. the pattern of dying and rising gods mimic the annual cycles of nature

C. Imitation magic saw human sexual unions (i.e. marriage of the gods) as a way of insuring fertility of crops, herds, and people.

IV. The Israelites

- A. YHWH's people were warned (i.e. Leviticus and Deuteronomy) to avoid the fertility cults (especially of Canaan).
- B. These cults were very popular because of the superstition of human beings and the added incentive of sexual activity.
- C. Idolatry involves the blessing of life to be sought in cultic or ritual ways instead of a personal faith and trust in YHWH.

IV. Suggested Reading

- A. W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*
- B. J. H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*
- C. James G. Frazer

- 1. *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*
- 2. *Folklore in the Old Testament*
- 3. *The Worship of Nature*

- D. C. H. Gordon, *Before the Bible*
- E. S. N. Kramer, *Mythologies of the Ancient World*

SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE

Fire has both positive and negative connotations in Scripture.

A. Positive

1. warms (cf. Isa. 44:15; John 18:18)
2. lights (cf. Isa. 50:11; Matt. 25:1-13)
3. cooks (cf. Exod. 12:8; Isa. 44:15-16; John 21:9)
4. purifies (cf. Num. 31:22-23; Prov. 17:3; Isa. 1:25; 6:6-8; Jer. 6:29; Mal. 3:2-3)
5. holiness (cf. Gen. 15:17; Exod. 3:2; 19:18; Ezek. 1:27; Heb. 12:29)
6. God's leadership (cf. Exod. 12:21; Num. 14:14; I Kgs. 18:24)
7. God's empowering (cf. Acts 2:3)

B. Negative

1. burns (cf. Josh. 6:24; 8:8; 11:11; Matt. 22:7)
2. destroys (cf. Gen. 19:24; Lev. 10:1-2)
3. anger (cf. Num. 21:28; Isa. 10:16; Zech. 12:6)
4. punishment (cf. Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Josh. 7:15)
5. false eschatological sign (cf. Rev. 13:13)

C. God's anger against sin is expressed in fire metaphors

1. His anger burns (cf. Hos. 8:5; Zeph. 3:8)
2. He pours out fire (cf. Nah. 1:6)
3. eternal fire (cf. Jer. 15:14; 17:4)
4. eschatological judgment (cf. Matt. 3:10; 13:40; John 15:6; II Thess. 1:7; II Pet. 3:7-10; Rev. 8:7; 13:13; 16:8)

D. Like so many metaphors in the Bible (i.e., leaven, lion) fire can be a blessing or a curse, depending on the context.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER (GREEK IDIOMS)

One Greek idiomatic phrase is "unto the ages" (cf. Luke 1:33; Rom. 1:25; 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; I Tim. 1:17), which may reflect the Hebrew *'olam*. See Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 321-319. Other related phrases are "unto the age" (cf. Matt. 21:19 [Mark 11:14]; Thess. 1:55; John 6:58; 8:35; 12:34; 13:8; 14:16; II Cor. 9:9) and "of the age of the ages" (cf. Eph. 3:21). There seems to be no distinction between these idioms for "forever." The term "ages" may be PLURAL in a figurative sense of the rabbinical grammatical construction called "the plural of majesty" or it may refer to the concept of several "ages" in the Jewish sense of "age of innocence," "age of wickedness," "age to come," or "age of righteousness."

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS USED FOR TALL/POWERFUL WARRIORS OR PEOPLE GROUPS

These large/tall/powerful people are called by several names:

1. *Nephilim* (BDB 658) - Gen. 6:4; Num. 13:33
2. *Rephaim* (either BDB 952 or BDB 952 II) - Gen. 14:5; Deut. 2:11,20; 3:11,13; Josh. 12:4; 13:12; II Sam. 21:16,18,20,22; I Chr. 20:4,6,8
3. *Zamzummin* (BDB 273), *zuzim* (BDB 265) - Gen. 14:5; Deut. 2:20
4. *Emim* (BDB 34) - Gen. 14:5; Deut. 2:10-11
5. *Anakim* (sons of *Anak*, BDB 778 I) - Num. 13:33; Deut. 1:28; 2:10-11,21; 9:2; Josh. 11:21-22; 14:12,15

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY

The biblical concept of “glory” is difficult to define. Believers’ glory is that they understand the gospel and glory in God, not in themselves (cf. 1:29-31; Jer. 9:23-24).

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for “glory” (*kbd*) was originally a commercial term relating to scales (“to be heavy”). That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God’s majesty (cf. Exod. 19:16-18; 24:17; Isa. 60:1-2). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Exod 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5. YHWH can only be truly known through Christ (cf. Jer. 1:14; Matt. 17:2; Heb. 1:3; James 2:1).

The term “glory” is somewhat ambiguous: (1) it may be parallel to “the righteousness of God”; (2) it may refer to the “holiness” or “perfection” of God; or (3) it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:1-22). It is first used of YHWH’s presence with His people during the wilderness wandering period in Exod. 16:7,10; Lev. 9:23; and Num. 14:10.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: GRIEVING RITES

The Israelites expressed sorrow for the death of a loved one and for personal repentance, as well as corporate crimes, in several ways:

1. tear other robe, Gen. 37:29,34; 44:13; Jdgs. 11:35; II Sam. 1:11; 3:31; I Kgs. 21:27; Job 1:20
2. put on sackcloth, Gen. 37:34; II Sam. 3:31; I Kgs. 21:27; Jer. 48:37
3. take off shoes, II Sam. 15:30; Isa. 20:3
4. put hands on head, II Sam. 13:9; Jer. 2:37
5. put dust on head, Josh. 7:6; I Sam. 4:12; Neh. 9:1
6. sit on the ground, Lam. 2:10; Ezek. 26:16 (lay on the ground, II Sam. 12:16) Isa. 47:1
7. beat the breast, I Sam. 25:1; II Sam. 11:26; Nah. 2:7
8. cut the body, Deut. 14:1; Jer. 16:6; 48:37
9. fast, II Sam. 1:16,22; I Kgs. 21:27
10. chant a lament, II Sam. 1:17; 3:31; II Chr. 35:25
11. baldness (hair pulled out or shaved), Jer. 48:37
12. cut beards short, Jer. 48:37
13. cover head or face, II Sam. 15:30; 19:4

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: HAGGAI (TAKEN FROM DR. UTLEY’S OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY)

I. NAME OF THE BOOK

- A. Named after its speaker
- B. His name means “Festival.” The *yod* or “I” at the end may be an abbreviation for YHWH; if so, “festival of YHWH” (cf. I Chr. 6:30) or the PRONOUN “my,” which would also refer to YHWH.

II. CANONIZATION

- A. This book is part of the “latter prophets” (*Ecclesiasticus* 49:10).
- B. It is part of “the Twelve,” a grouping of minor prophets (*Baba Bathra* 14b):
 - 1. like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, they fit on one scroll.
 - 2. they represent the twelve tribes or the symbolic number of organization.
 - 3. they reflect the traditional view of the book’s chronology.
- C. The order of “the Twelve” or Minor Prophets has been linked by many scholars to a chronological sequence. It is obvious that Haggai and Zechariah are paired historically.

III. GENRE

- A. This is a series of four or five sermons (1:13).
- B. It is not poetic.

III. AUTHORSHIP

- A. Haggai is mentioned in Ezra 5:1; 6:14, and Zech. 8:9, where he is linked with Zechariah. He was probably a returnee from Exile.
- B. He is also mentioned in I Esdras 6:1; 7:3 and II Esdras 1:40. *Ecclesiasticus* 49:11 is a quote from Haggai 2:23.
- C. Jerome says that he was a priest, but this is a misunderstanding derived from 2:10-19.
- D. Ewald and Pusey suggest that 2:3 implies that he saw Solomon’s Temple, which would make him 70 or 80 years old.
- E. Cyril of Alexandria mentions a general opinion in his day that he was an angel. This is from a misunderstanding of the Hebrew term “messenger” in 1:13.
- F. The LXX attributes several Psalms to Haggai and Zechariah: 112, 126, 127, 137, 146-149.
- G. all of Haggai’s four sermons are recorded in the third person which implies:
 - 1. a common literary technique
 - 2. a scribe or editor.

IV. DATE

- A. Haggai was a post-exilic prophet along with Zechariah, his contemporary.
- B. The book is dated from the first day of the sixth month (1:1) until the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month (2:10,20) of the second year of Darius I Hystaspes (521-486 B.C.). Therefore, the date is 520 B.C. This was four years before the second Temple was finished in 516 B.C., and fulfills the prophecy of Jeremiah regarding the seventy years of exile, which began in 586 B.C.

VI. CHRONOLOGY OF THE PERIOD (taken from *The Minor Prophets* by Dr. Theo Laetsch, published by Concordia, p. 385).

Darius’ Regnal Year	Year b.c.	Month	Day	Text	Content
---------------------	-----------	-------	-----	------	---------

2	520		6		
		Sept/Oct	1	Hag. 1:1-11	Haggai rouses the people into activity
			24	Hag. 1:12-15	The people begin to build
			7		
		Oct/Nov	1	Hag. 2:1-9	The latter glory of God's Temple
			8		
		Nov/Dec	?	Zech. 1:1-6	Zechariah begins to prophesy
			9		
		Dec/Jan	24	Hag. 2:10-19	God will begin to bless
				Hag. 2:20-23	Messiah's kingdom established after overthrow of world powers
	519		11		
		Feb/Mar	24	Zech. 1:7-6:8	Zechariah's night visions
4	518		9		
		Dec/Jan	4	Zech. 7, 8	Repentance urged; blessing promised
6	516		12		
		Mar/Apr	3	Ezra 6:15	Dedication of Temple
		?		Zech. 9-14	After dedication of Temple

VII. LITERARY UNITS—It is outlined by the prophet's sermons

- A. First Sermon, 1:1-11, Rebuild the Temple!
- B. The leaders and people respond, 1:12-15.
- C. Second Sermon, 2:1-9, The Temple size is not the issue!
- D. Third Sermon, 2:10-19, God's blessings will flow if the people obey and rebuild the Temple.
- E. Fourth Sermon, 2:20-23, The universal reign of the Messiah foreshadowed in Zerubbabel.

VIII. MAIN TRUTHS

- A. The book focuses on the rebuilding of the Second Temple, which had been neglected several years earlier.
 - 1. Ezra 5:16 (1st year, under Sheshbazzar)
 - 2. Ezra 3:8-13 (2nd year, under Zerubbabel)
- B. God's promises of immediate physical blessings and future Messianic blessings are linked to the rebuilding of the Temple (restoration of Mosaic Covenant).
- C. The size and majesty of the Temple was not the issue, rather its presence. God's presence, which it symbolized, was the true glory!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: HANG

The VERB “hang” (BDB 1067, KB 1738) has two senses:

1. literally to hang by a rope
 - a. Arabic, “let down a rope”
 - b. a Hebrew practice, II Sam. 17:23 and NT, Matt. 17:5
 - c. a Babylonian practice, Code of Hammurabi
 - d. a Persian practice, cf. Ezra 6:11; Esther 5:14; 7:9-10; 9:13,25
2. to impale the person on a sharpened stake
 - a. an Egyptian procedure, cf. Gen. 40:19; 41:13
 - b. a Babylonian procedure, cf. Code of Hammurabi
 - c. an Assyrian procedure

Usually it was done after someone was killed by other means as a way of public shaming. A proper burial was very important to ancient people and affected their view of a contented afterlife (e.g., Deut. 21:23).

In the Bible itself it is hard to know for sure if #1 or #2 above is right. Clearly in Deut. 21:22-23; Josh. 10:26-27; I Sam. 31:10,12; II Sam. 4:12; 21:12, the people publicly exposed were already dead, but what about Josh. 8:29 and II Sam. 21:9?

The rabbis of Jesus’ day saw this text as referring to crucifixion. The religious leaders wanted Jesus crucified so that as a Messianic pretender He would be cursed by YHWH (cf. Deut. 21:23). The normal death for blasphemy was stoning. I have often heard it said that the Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day did not have the legal right of capital punishment under Roman rule, so they took Jesus to Pilate to have Him killed. However, they stoned Stephen (cf. Acts 7) without Roman permission, why not Jesus? They wanted Him crucified to reflect not only death and public shame, but the curse of God!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART

The Greek term *kardia* is used in the Septuagint and NT to reflect the Hebrew term *lēb*. It is used in several ways (cf. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 403-404):

1. the center of physical life, a metaphor for the person (cf. Acts 14:17; II Cor. 3:2-3; James 5:5)
2. the center of spiritual (moral) life
 - a. God knows the heart (cf. Luke 16:15; Rom. 8:27; I Cor. 14:25; I Thess. 2:4; Rev. 2:23)
 - b. used of mankind’s spiritual life (cf. Matt. 15:18-19; 18:35; Rom. 6:17; I Tim. 1:5; II Tim. 2:22; I Pet. 1:22)
3. the center of the thought life (i.e., intellect, cf. Matt. 13:15; 24:48; Acts 7:23; 16:14; 28:27; Rom. 1:21; 10:6; 16:18; II Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:18; 4:18; James 1:26; II Pet. 1:19; Rev. 18:7; heart is synonymous with mind in II Cor. 3:14-15 and Phil. 4:7)
4. the center of the volition (i.e., will, cf. Acts 5:4; 11:23; I Cor. 4:5; 7:37; II Cor. 9:7)
5. the center of the emotions (cf. Matt. 5:28; Acts 2:26,37; 7:54; 21:13; Rom. 1:24; II Cor. 2:4; 7:3; Eph. 6:22; Phil. 1:7)
6. unique place of the Spirit’s activity (cf. Rom. 5:5; II Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6 [i.e., Christ in our hearts, Eph. 3:17])
7. The heart is a metaphorical way of referring to the entire person (cf. Matt. 22:37, quoting Deut. 6:5). The thoughts, motives, and actions attributed to the heart fully reveal the type of individual. The OT has some striking usages of the terms:

- a. Gen. 6:6; 8:21, “God was grieved to His heart” (also notice Hosea 11:8-9)
- b. Deut. 4:29; 6:5, “with all your heart and all your soul”
- c. Deut. 10:16, “uncircumcised heart” and Rom. 2:29
- d. Ezek. 18:31-32, “a new heart”
- e. Ezek. 36:26, “a new heart” vs. “a heart of stone”

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: HEBREW POETRY

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. This type of literature makes up 1/3 of the Old Testament. It is especially common in the “Prophets” (all but Haggai and Malachi contain poetry) and “Writings” sections of the Hebrew canon.
- B. It is very different from English poetry. English poetry is developed from Greek and Latin poetry, which is primarily sound-based. Hebrew poetry has much in common with Canaanite poetry. It is basically thought-based in balanced, parallel lines.
- C. The archaeological discovery north of Israel at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) has helped scholars understand OT poetry. This poetry from the 15th century B.C. has obvious literary connections with biblical poetry.

II. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF POETRY

- A. It is very compact.
- B. It tries to express truth, feelings or experiences in imagery.
- C. It is primarily written not oral. It is highly structured. This structure is expressed in:
 - 1. balanced lines (parallelism)
 - 2. word plays
 - 3. sound plays

III. THE STRUCTURE ®. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp.965-975)

- A. Bishop Robert Lowth in his book, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1753) was the first to characterize biblical poetry as balanced lines of thought. Most modern English translations are formatted to show the lines of poetry.
 - 1. synonymous - the lines express the same thought in different words:
 - a. Psalm 3:1; 49:1; 83:14; 103:13
 - b. Proverbs 19:5; 20:1
 - c. Isaiah 1:3,10
 - d. Amos 5:24; 8:10
 - 2. antithetical - the lines express opposite thoughts by means of contrast or stating the positive and the negative:
 - a. Psalm 1:6; 90:6
 - b. Proverbs 1:29; 10:1,12; 15:1; 19:4
 - 3. synthetic - the next two or three lines develop the thought - Ps. 1:1-2; 19:7-9; 29:1-2

4. chiasmic - a pattern of poetry expressing the message in a descending and ascending order. The main point is found in the middle of the pattern.

B. Charles A. Briggs in his book, *General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture* (1899) developed the next stage of analysis of Hebrew poetry:

1. emblematic - one clause literal and the second metaphorical, Ps. 42:1; 103:3
2. climatic or stair-like - the clauses reveal truth in an ascending fashion, Ps. 19:7-14; 29:1-2; 103:20-22
3. introverted - a series of clauses, usually at least four are related by the internal structure of line 1 to 4 and 2 to 3 - Ps. 30:8-10a

C. G. B. Gray in his book, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (1915), developed the concept of balanced clauses further by:

1. complete balance - where every word in line one is repeated or balanced by a word in line two - Psalm 83:14 and Isaiah 1:3
2. incomplete balance where the clauses are not the same length - Ps. 59:16; 75:6

D. Today there is a growing recognition of literary structural pattern in Hebrew called a chiasm, which usually denotes a number of parallel lines (a,b,b,a; a,b,c,b,a) forming an hour glass shape, often the central line(s) is emphasized.

E. Type of sound patterns found in poetry in general, but not often in eastern poetry

1. play on alphabet (acrostic, cf. Ps. 9,34,37,119; Prov. 31:10ff; Lamentations 1-4)
2. play on consonants (alliteration, cf. Ps. 6:8; 27:7; 122:6; Isa. 1:18-26)
3. play on vowels (assonance, cf. Gen. 49:17; Exod. 14:14; Ezek. 27:27)
4. play on repetition of similar sounding words with different meanings (paronomasia)
5. play on words which, when pronounced, sound like the thing they name (onomatopoeia)
6. special opening and close (inclusive)

F. There are several types of poetry in the Old Testament. Some are topic related and some are form related:

1. dedication song - Num. 21:17-18
2. work songs - (alluded to but not recorded in Jdgs. 9:27); Isa. 16:10; Jer. 25:30; 48:33
3. ballads - Num. 21:27-30; Isa. 23:16
4. drinking songs - negative, Isa. 5:11-13; Amos 6:4-7 and positive, Isa. 22:13
5. love poems - Song of Songs, wedding riddle - Jdgs. 14:10-18, wedding song - Ps. 45
6. laments/dirge - (alluded to but not recorded in II Sam. 1:17 and II Chr. 35:25) II Sam. 3:33; Ps. 27, 28; Jer. 9:17-22; Lam.; Ezek. 19:1-14; 26:17-18; Nah. 3:15-19)
7. war songs - Gen. 4:23-24; Exod. 15:1-18,20; Num. 10:35-36; 21:14-15; Josh. 10:13; Jdgs. 5:1-31; 11:34; I Sam. 18:6; II Sam. 1:18; Isa. 47:1-15; 37:21
8. special benedictions or blessing of leader - Gen. 49; Num. 6:24-26; Deut. 32; II Sam. 23:1-7
9. magical texts - Balaam, Num. 24:3-9

10. sacred poems - Psalms
11. acrostic poems - Ps. 9,34,37,119; Prov. 31:10ff and Lamentations 1-4
12. curses - Num. 21:22-30
13. taunt poems - Isa. 14:1-22; 47:1-15; Ezek. 28:1-23
14. a book of war poems (Jashar) - Num. 21:14-15; Josh. 10:12-13; II Sam. 1:18

IV. GUIDELINE TO INTERPRETING HEBREW POETRY

- A. Look for the central truth of the stanza or strophe (this is like a paragraph in prose.) The RSV was the first modern translation to identify poetry by stanzas. Compare modern translations for helpful insights.
- B. Identify the figurative language and express it in prose. Remember this type of literature is very compact, much is left for the reader to fill in.
- C. Be sure to relate the longer issue-oriented poems to their literary context (often the whole book) and historical setting.
- D. Judges 4 & 5 are very helpful in seeing how poetry expresses history. Judges 4 is prose and Judges 5 is poetry of the same event (also compare Exod. 14 & 15).
- E. Attempt to identify the type of parallelism involved, whether synonymous, antithetical, or synthetic. This is very important.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: A HERMENEUTICS APPROACH TO GENESIS

A. Studying Genesis 1-11 is difficult because:

1. we are all affected by our own cultures and denominational training
2. today several pressures consciously and subconsciously affect our view of “the beginnings”
 - a. modern archaeology (Mesopotamian parallels)
 - b. modern science (current theories)
 - c. the history of interpretation
 - (1) Judaism
 - (2) early church
3. this opening literary unit of the Bible is presented as history, but several things surprise the interpreter
 - a. Mesopotamian parallels
 - b. eastern literary techniques (two apparent accounts of creation)
 - c. unusual events
 - (1) woman created from a “rib”
 - (2) a talking snake
 - (3) a boat with all the animals on board for a year
 - (4) mixing of angels and humans
 - (5) long life of people
 - d. several word plays on the names of the main characters (cf. K. 3)
4. Christians need to be reminded of how the NT reinterprets Gen. 1 and 2 in light of Christ. He is the Father’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; I Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:2), of both the

visible and the invisible realm (cf. Col. 1:16). This new revelation shows the need to be cautious of literalism in Gen. 1-3. The Trinity is involved in creation.

- a. God the Father in Genesis 1:1
- b. God the Spirit in Genesis 1:2
- c. God the Son in the NT.

This may explain the PLURALS in Genesis 1:26; 5:1,3; 9:6

B. Genesis 1-11 is not a scientific document, but in some ways modern science parallels its presentation (order of creation and geological levels). It is not anti-scientific but pre-scientific. It presents truth:

- 1. from an earth perspective
- 2. from a phenomenological perspective (i.e. the five senses)

It has functioned as a revealer of truth for many cultures over many years. It presents truth to a modern scientific culture but without specific explanation of events.

C. It is amazingly succinct, beautifully described and artistically structured.

- 1. things divide
- 2. things develop

D. The keys to its understanding are found in

- 1. its genre
- 2. its relation to its own day
- 3. its structure
- 4. its monotheism
- 5. its theological purpose

Interpretation must balance:

- 1. an exegesis of the verses
- 2. a systematic understanding of all Scripture
- 3. genre specificity

It reveals the origin of physical things (“and it was good,” cf. 1:31) and the corruption of these things (cf. 3). In many ways the Christ event is a new creation and Jesus is the new Adam (cf. Rom. 5:12-21). The new age may be a restoration of the garden of Eden and its intimate fellowship with God and the animals (compare Gen. 1-2 with Rev. 21-22).

E. The great truth of this chapter is not how or when, but who, moving rapidly toward why!

F. Genesis reflects true knowledge but not exhaustive knowledge. It is given to us in ancient (Mesopotamian) thought forms, but it is infallible truth. It is related to its day, but it is totally unique. It speaks of the inexpressible, yet it speaks truly. Basically it is a world-view (who), not a world-picture (how).

G. Without Genesis 1-3 the Bible is incomprehensible. Notice how quickly the story moves from (1) sin to redemption and (2) humanity to Israel. Creation forms an integral but passing piece of the account of God’s choice of Israel for the purpose of world-wide redemption (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6 and John 3:16; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9).

H. Your answer to the question, “What is the purpose of Inspiration and Revelation?” will affect the way you see Genesis 1. If you see the purpose as the impartation of facts about creation, you will view it one way (i.e. propositional truths). If you see it as conveying general truths about God, humanity, and sin, then

possibly you will see it theologically (i.e. paradigmatic). If, however, you view the basic purpose as the establishment of a relationship between God and mankind, possibly another (i.e. existentially).

- I. This section of Genesis is surely theological. As the plagues of the Exodus showed YHWH's power over the nature gods of Egypt, Genesis 1,2 may show YHWH's power over the astral gods of Mesopotamia. The main element is God. God alone did it for His own purposes.
- J. I marvel at my own ignorance! I am appalled at my own historical, cultural, and denominational conditioning! What a mighty God we serve! What an awesome God has reached out to us (even in our rebellion)! The Bible is a balance of love and power; grace and justice! The more we know the more we know we don't know!
- K. Here are the basic approaches of some helpful books:

1. Genesis 1-2 interpreted along the lines of modern science:

- a. Barnard Ramm's *The Christian's View of Science and Scripture* (good scientifically and theologically)
- b. Hugh Ross' *Creation and Time* and *The Genesis Question* (good scientifically but weak theologically)
- c. Harry Peo and Jimmy Davis' *Science and Faith: An Evangelical Dialog* (very helpful)
- d. Darrel R. Falk, *Coming to Peace with Science: Bridging the Worlds Between Faith and Biology* (evangelical approach to theistic evolution)

2. Genesis 1-2 interpreted along the lines of ancient Near Eastern parallels

- a. R. K. Harrison's *Introduction to the Old Testament and Old Testament Times*
- b. John H. Walton's *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context*
- c. K. A. Kitchen's *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*
- d. Edwin M. Yamauchi's *The Stones and the Scriptures*

3. Genesis 1-2 interpreted along the lines of theology from LaSor, Hubbard and Bush's *Old Testament Survey*

- a. "Literary device also is found in the names used. The correspondence of the name with the person's function or role is striking in several instances. Adam means "mankind" and Eve is "(she who gives) life." Surely, when an author of a story names the principal characters Mankind and Life, something is conveyed about the degree of literalness intended! Similarly Cain means "forger (of metals)"; Enoch is connected with "dedication, consecration" (4:17; 5:18); Jubal with horn and trumpet (4:21); while Cain, condemned to be a *nāḏ*, a "wanderer," goes to live in the land of *Nod*, a name transparently derived from the same Hebrew root, thus the land of wandering! This suggests that the author is writing as an artist, a storyteller, who uses literary device and artifice. One must endeavor to distinguish what he intends to teach from the literary means employed" p. 72.

- b. the theological implication of Gen. 1-11:

"Implication for Gen. 1-11. Recognizing the literary technique and form and noting the literary background of chs. 1-11 does not constitute a challenge to the reality, the "eventness," of the facts portrayed. One need not regard this account as myth; however, it is not "history" in the modern sense of eyewitness, objective reporting. Rather, it conveys theological truths about events, portrayed in a largely symbolic, pictorial literary genre. This is not to say that Gen. 1-11 conveys historical falsehood. That conclusion would follow only if it purported to contain objective descriptions. The clear evidence already reviewed shows

that such was not the intent. On the other hand, the view that the truths taught in these chapters have no objective basis is mistaken. They affirm fundamental truths: creation of all things by God; special divine intervention in the production of the first man and woman; unity of the human race; pristine goodness of the created world, including humanity; entrance of sin through the disobedience of the first pair; depravity and rampant sin after the Fall. All these truths are facts, and their certainty implies the reality of the facts. Put another way, the biblical author uses such literary traditions to describe unique primeval events that have no time-conditioned, human-conditioned, experience-based historical analogy and hence can be described only by symbol.

The same problem arises at the end time: the biblical author there, in the book of Revelation, adopts the esoteric imagery and involved literary artifice of apocalyptic” p. 74.

- c. If it is true that one language was spoken in Gen. 1-10 (cf. Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Babel of Tongues: A Sumerian Version*, “Journal of the American Oriental Society, 88:108-11), then it needs to be clearly stated that it was not Hebrew. Therefore, all of the Hebrew word plays are from Moses’ day. This verifies the literary nature of Gen. 1-11.

- 4. I would like to make a personal comment. I love and appreciate those who love and appreciate the Bible. I am so grateful for people who take its message as an inspired, authoritative message from the One true God. All of us who study the Scriptures are attempting to worship and glorify God with our minds (cf. Matt. 22:37). The fact that we as individual believers approach the Bible differently is not an aspect of unbelief or rebellion but an act of sincere devotion and an attempt to understand so as to incorporate God’s truth into our lives. The more I study Genesis 1-11 and for that matter, much of the book of Revelation, I perceive it is true but literary, not literal. The key in interpreting the Bible is not my applying a personal philosophical or hermeneutical grid over the text but allowing the intent of the inspired original authors to fully express themselves. To take a literary passage and demand it to be literal when the text itself gives clues to its symbolic and figurative nature imposes my biases on a divine message. Genre (type of literature) is the key in a theological understanding of “how it all began” and “how it will all end.” I appreciate the sincerity and commitment of those who, for whatever reason, usually personality type or professional training, interpret the Bible in modern, literal, western categories, when in fact it is an ancient eastern book. I say all this to say that I am grateful to God for those who approach Genesis 1-11 with presuppositions that I personally do not share, for I know they will help, encourage and reach people of like personalities and perspectives to love, trust and apply God’s Book to their lives! However, I do not agree that Genesis 1-11 or the book of Revelation should be approached literally, whether it is *Creation Research Society* (i.e. young earth) or Hugh Ross’s *Reasons to Believe* (i.e. old earth). For me this section of the Bible emphasizes the “Who” and “why” not the “how” and “when” of creation. I accept the modern science’s sincerity in studying the physical aspects of creation. I reject “naturalism” (i.e. all life is a chance development of natural processes), but surely see process as a valid and demonstrable aspect of our world and universe. I think God directed and used process. But natural processes do not explain the diversity and complexity of life, current and past. To truly understand current reality I need both the theoretical models of modern science and the theological models of Genesis 1-11. Genesis 1-11 is a theological necessity for understanding the rest of the Bible, but it is an ancient, literary, succinct, artistic, eastern presentation, not a literal, modern, western presentation. Parts of the Bible are surely historical narrative. There is a place for the literal interpretation of Scripture: there was a call of

Abraham, an Exodus, a virgin birth, a Calvary, a resurrection; there will be a second coming and an eternal kingdom. The question is one of genre, not reality, of authorial intent, not personal preferences in interpretation. Let all men be liars – and God be true (cf. Rom. 3:4)!!!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: BRIEF OUTLINE OF HISTORICAL ALLUSIONS TO PERSIAN KINGS

- A. The rebuilding of the temple as approved and subsidized by Cyrus II, vv. 1-5
- B. Letter of accusation from the leaders of the Province Beyond the River to Ahasuerus about rebuilding the walls of the city of Jerusalem (Xerxes I, 486-465 B.C.), v. 6
- C. Letter of accusation from the leaders of the Province Beyond the River to Artaxerxes (I Longimanus, 465-424 B.C.) about rebuilding of the walls of the city of Jerusalem, vv. 7-23.
It is possible to see v. 7 as separate from v. 8 because the names are different (cf. Kidner, *Tyndale Commentary Series*, p. 51). If so it marks a separate legal attempt. However, it could be that simply different officials are involved.
- D. Darius I (Hystaspes, 523-486 B.C.), which was the time of Haggai and Zechariah, is mentioned specifically in vv. 5b and 24. The temple was started in about 520 and finished in 516 B.C.
- E. This chapter is a summary of the opposition (both to the temple and the walls of Jerusalem) from the local people group to the returning Jews rebuilding.

- 1. Verses 1-5,24 refer to the temple
- 2. Verses 6-23 refer to the walls of Jerusalem

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY

I. Old Testament Usage

- A. The etymology of the term (*kadosh*) is uncertain, possibly Canaanite. It is possible that part of the root (i.e., *kd*) means “to divide.” This is the source of the popular definition “separated (from Canaanite culture, cf. Deut. 7:6; 14:2,21; 26:19) for God’s use.”
- B. It relates to cultic things, places, times, and persons. It is not used in Genesis, but becomes common in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.
- C. In the Prophetic literature (esp. Isaiah and Hosea) the personal element previously present, but not emphasized, comes to the fore. It becomes a way of designating the essence of God (cf. Isa. 6:3). God is holy His name representing His character is Holy. His people who are to reveal His character to a needy world are holy (if they obey the covenant in faith).
- D. God’s mercy and love are inseparable from the theological concepts of covenants, justice, and essential character. Herein is the tension in God toward an unholy, fallen, rebellious humanity. There is a very interesting article on the relationship between God as “merciful” and God as “holy” in Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 112-113.

II. The New Testament

- A. The writers of the NT are Hebrew thinkers (except Luke), but influenced by Koine Greek (i.e., the Septuagint). It is the Greek translation of the OT that controls their

vocabulary, not Classical Greek literature, thought, or religion.

- B. Jesus is holy because He came from God and is like God and He is God (cf. Luke 1:35; 4:34; Acts 3:14; 4:27,30). He is the Holy and Righteous One (cf. Acts 3:14; 22:14). Jesus is holy because He is sinless (cf. John 8:46; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; I Pet. 1:19; 2:22; I John 3:5).
- C. Because God is holy, His children are to be holy (cf. Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7,26; Matt. 5:48; I Pet. 1:16). Because Jesus is holy His followers are to be holy (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; I Thess. 3:13; 4:3; I Pet. 1:15). Christians are saved to serve in Christlikeness.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: HORNS USED BY ISRAEL

There are four words in Hebrew association with horns/trumpets:

1. “the ram’s horn” (BDB 901) - turned into an instrument of sound, cf. Josh. 6:5. This same word is used for the ram caught by his horns which Abraham will substitute for Isaac in Gen. 22:13.
2. “trumpet” (BDB 1051) - from Assyrian term for wild sheep (ibex). This is the horn that was used in Exod 19:16,19 at Mt. Sinai/Horeb. #1 and #2 are parallel in Josh. 6:5. It was used to communicate times to worship and time to fight (i.e., Jericho was both, cf. 6:4).
3. “ram’s horn” (BDB 385) - from Phoenician word for Ram (cf. 6:4,6,8,13). It also stands for the Year of Jubilee (cf. Lev. 25:13,28,40,50,52,54; 27:17,18,23,24).
(All of these first three seem interchangeable with no distinction intended. The Mishnah (RH 3.2) allowed any animal horn—sheep, goat, or antelope, but not from a cow.)
4. “trumpets” (BDB 348) - possibly from the VERB “stretch out,” implying a straight bone (not curved as the animal horns). These were made of silver (after the shape and form of Egypt). These are used:
 - a. with worship rites (cf. Num. 10:2,8,10)
 - b. for military purposes (cf. Num. 10:9; 31:6; Hosea 5:8; Ezra 3:10; Neh. 12:35,41)
 - c. for royal purposes (cf. II Kgs. 11:14)

One of these metal horns is depicted on the Arch of Titus in Rome; also Josephus describes them in *Antiq.* 3.12.6.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: ISRAEL (the name)

I. The Name’s meaning is uncertain (BDB 975).

- A. *El* Persisteth
- B. Let *El* Persist (JUSSIVE)
- C. *El* Perseveres
- D. Let *El* Contend
- E. *El* Strives
- F. He who strives with God (Gen. 32:28).

II. Usages in the OT

- A. Jacob’s name (supplanter, heel grabber, BDB 784, cf. Gen. 25:26) is changed after wrestling with the spiritual personage at the river Jabbok (cf. Gen. 32:22-32; Exod. 32:13). Often

the meanings of Hebrew names are sound plays, not etymologies (cf. 32:28). Israel becomes his name (e.g., Gen. 35:10; 32:13).

- B. It came to be used as a collective name for all of his twelve sons (e.g., Gen. 32:32; 49:16; Exod. 1:7; 4:22; 28:11; Deut. 3:18; 10:6).
- C. It came to designate the nation formed by the twelve tribes before the exodus (cf. Gen. 47:27; Exod. 4:22; 5:2) and after (cf. Deut. 1:1; 18:6; 33:10).
- D. After the united monarchy of Saul, David, and Solomon the tribes split under Rehoboam (cf. I Kings 12).

- 1. the distinction starts even before the official split (e.g., II Sam. 3:10; 5:5; 20:1; 24:9; I Kgs. 1:35; 4:20)
- 2. designates the northern tribes until the fall of Samaria to Assyria in 7:22 B.C. (cf. II Kings 17).

E. Used of Judah in a few places (e.g., Isaiah 1; Micah 1:15-16).

F. After the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles it became the collective name for all of Jacob's descendants again (e.g., Isa. 17:7,9; Jer. 2:4; 50:17,19).

G. Used of laity in contradistinction from priests (cf. I Chr. 9:2; Ezra 10:25; Neh. 11:3).

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: ISRAEL'S MANDATED RESPONSE TO CANAANITE FERTILITY WORSHIP

Deuteronomy 12:3 lists several cultic items of *Ba'al* worship and how Israel is to destroy them.

1. "You shall tear down their altars"

- a. the VERB, BDB 683, KB 736, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. Deut. 7:5; II Chr. 31:3; 34:4
- b. the item, "altars," BDB 258, *Ba'al's* altars were raised platforms of cut stone with an uplifted stone (pillar) and a hole to plant a tree or secure a wooden, carved stake (*Asherah*)

2. "smash their *sacred* pillars"

- a. the VERB, BDB 990, KB 1402, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. Deut. 7:5; II Kgs. 3:2; 10:27
- b. the item, "pillars," BDB 663. These were uplifted stones used as a phallic symbol for the male fertility god (cf. 16:22).

3. "burn their *Asherim* with fire"

- a. the VERB, BDB 976, KB 1358, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Deut. 7:5, in II Chr. 31:1 and 34:4 they were to be "chopped down."
- b. the item, *Asherim*, BDB 81. It symbolized the tree of life. *Asherah* (cf. ABD, vol. 1, pp. 483-87, although in the poetic literature from Ugarit, Anath is *Ba'al's* consort, cf. ABD, vol. 1, pp. 225-26) was the female consort of *Ba'al*. It may have been a live tree or a curved stake.

4. "you shall cut down the engraved images of their gods"

- a. the VERB, BDB 154, KB 180, *Piel* IMPERFECT, cf. Deut. 7:5; II Chr. 14:2; 31:1; 34:4,7
- b. the item, "engraved images of their gods," BDB 820 CONSTRUCT 43. Deut. 7:5; and II Chr. 34:7 make a distinction between the *Asherim* and the images.

5. "obliterate their name from that place"

- a. the VERB, BDB 1, KB 2, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. Deut. 12:2(twice)
- b. the item, “name,” BDB 1027. This seems to represent the god’s name as owner of the place, which is now destroyed and, therefore, their names have perished. It is YHWH’s name that has a name/worship site now (cf. Deut. 12:5,11).

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS THE NAZARENE

There are several different Greek terms that the NT uses to precisely designate which Jesus is being referenced.

1. NT Terms

- a. Nazareth - the city in Galilee (cf. Luke 1:26; 2:4,39,51; 4:16; Acts 10:38). This city is not mentioned in contemporary sources, but has been found in later inscriptions. For Jesus to be from Nazareth was not a compliment (cf. John 1:46). The sign over Jesus’ cross which included this place name was a sign of Jewish contempt.
- b. *Nazarēnos* - seems to also refer to a geographical location (cf. Luke 4:34; 24:19).
- c. *Nazōraios* - may refer to a city, but could also be a play on the Hebrew Messianic term “Branch” (*netzer*, cf. Isa. 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12; in the NT Rev. 22:16). Luke uses this of Jesus in 18:37 and Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 22:8; 24:5; 26:9.
- d. Related to #3 *nāzīr* means consecrated one by means of a vow.

2. Historical usages outside the NT. This designation has other historical usages.

- a. It denoted a Jewish (pre-Christian) heretical group (Aramaic *nāsōrayyā*).
- b. It was used in Jewish circles to describe believers in Christ (cf. Acts 24:5,14; 28:22, *nosri*).
- c. It became the regular term to denote believers in the Syrian (Aramaic) churches. “Christian” was used in the Greek churches to denote believers.
- d. Sometime after the fall of Jerusalem, the Pharisees reorganized at Jamnia and instigated a formal separation between the synagogue and the church. An example of the type of curse formulas against Christians is found in “the Eighteen Benedictions” from *Berakoth* 28b-29a, which calls the believers “Nazarenes.”
“May the Nazarenes and heretics disappear in a moment; they shall be erased from the book of life and not be written with the faithful.”
- e. It was used by Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 126:1 who used Isaiah’s *netzer* of Jesus.

3. Author’s opinion

I am surprised by so many spellings of the term, although I know this is not unheard of in the OT as “Joshua” has several different spellings in Hebrew. Yet, because of:

- a. the close association with the Messianic term “Branch”
- b. combined with the negative context
- c. little or no contemporary attestation to the city of Nazareth in Galilee
- d. it coming from the mouth of a demon in an eschatological sense (i.e., “Have you come to destroy us?”)

I remain uncertain as to its precise meaning.

For a full bibliography of studies of this word group by scholarship see Colin Brown (ed.), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2, p. 346 or Raymond E. Brown, *Birth*, pp. 209-213, 223-225.

SPECIAL TOPIC: KNOW (using mostly Deuteronomy as a paradigm)

The Hebrew word “know” (BDB 393) has several senses (semantic fields) in the *Qal*.

1. to understand good and evil - Gen. 3:22; Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:14-15; Jonah 4:11
2. to know by understanding - Deut. 9:2,3,6; 18:21
3. to know by experience - Deut. 3:19; 4:35; 8:2,3,5; 11:2; 20:20; 31:13; Josh. 23:14
4. to consider - Deut. 4:39; 11:2; 29:16
5. to know personally
 - a. a person - Gen. 29:5; Exod. 1:8; Deut. 22:2; 28:35,36; 33:9
 - b. a god - Deut. 11:28; 13:2,6,13; 28:64; 29:26; 32:17
 - c. YHWH - Deut. 4:35,39; 7:9; 29:6; Isa. 1:3; 56:10-11
 - d. sexual - Gen. 4:1,17,25; 24:16; 38:26
6. a learned skill or knowledge - Isa. 29:11,12; Amos 5:16
7. be wise - Deut. 29:4; Pro. 1:2; 4:1; Isa. 29:24
8. God’s knowledge
 - a. of Moses - Deut. 34:10
 - b. of Israel - Deut. 31:21,27,29

SPECIAL TOPIC: LAYING ON OF HANDS IN THE BIBLE

This gesture of personal involvement is used in several different ways in the Bible.

1. passing on the family leadership (cf. Gen. 48:18)
2. identifying with the death of a sacrificial animal as a substitute
 - a. priests (cf. Exod. 29:10,15,19; Lev. 16:21; Num. 8:12)
 - b. lay persons (cf. Lev. 1:4; 3:2,8; 4:4,15,24; II Chr. 29:23)
3. setting persons aside to serve God in a special task or ministry (cf. Num. 8:10; 27:18,23; Deut. 34:9; Acts 6:6; 13:3; I Tim. 4:14; 5:22; II Tim. 1:6)
4. participating in the judicial stoning of a sinner (cf. Lev. 24:14)
5. receiving a blessing for health, happiness, and godliness (cf. Matt. 19:13,15; Mark 10:16)
6. relating to physical healing (cf. Matt. 9:18; Mark 5:23; 6:5; 7:32; 8:23; 16:18; Luke 4:40; 13:13; Acts 9:17; 28:8)
7. receiving the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 8:17-19; 9:17; 19:6)

There is a surprising lack of uniformity in the passages that have been historically used to support the ecclesiastical installation of leaders (i.e., ordination).

1. In Acts 6:6 it is the Apostles who lay hands on the seven for local ministry.
2. In Acts 13:3 it is the prophets and teachers who lay hands on Barnabas and Paul for missionary service.
3. In I Tim. 4:14 it is the local elders who were involved in Timothy’s initial call and installation
4. In II Tim. 1:6 it is Paul who lays hands on Timothy.

This diversity and ambiguity illustrate the lack of organization in the first century church. The early church was much more dynamic and regularly used the spiritual gifts of believers (cf. I Cor. 14). The NT is simply not written to advocate or delineate a governmental model or ordination procedure.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: LIONS IN THE OT

Often an individual's or nation's power is described as being like a lion, the king of the predators.

1. Judah, Gen. 49:9; Micah 5:8
2. YHWH on Israel's behalf, Num. 24:9; Isa. 31:4; 35:9; Hos. 11:10
3. Israel as a defeated lion, Ezek. 19
4. tribe of Dan, Deut. 33:22
5. David's power over lions, I Sam. 17:34-37
6. Saul and Jonathan, II Sam. 1:23
7. symbolic protectors of the throne of Solomon, I Kgs. 10:19-20
8. God uses lions as punishment, I Kgs. 13,20; II Kgs. 17:25-26; Isa. 15:9; metaphor in Job 4:10 and Jer. 2:30; 49:19,44; Lam. 3:10; Amos 3:4,8,12; 5:19; Hos. 5:14; 13:7-8; Nah. 2:11-12
9. describe David's enemies from whom God will deliver him, Ps. 7:2; 10:9; 17:12; 22:13,21
10. a metaphor for unknown evil, Prov. 22:13; 26:13; 28:15
11. used to describe Babylon's military, Jer. 4:7; 49:19-22; 51:38
12. the military of the nations against God's people, Jer. 5:6; 25:32-38; 50:17; Joel 1:6
13. how God's people treat Him, Jer. 12:8
14. how God's leaders treat the people, Ezek. 22:25; Zeph. 3:3
15. metaphor for king's anger, Prov. 19:12; 20:2
16. metaphor for the godly, Prov. 28:1;
17. metaphor for the Messiah, Gen. 49:9; Rev. 5:5

In light of usage #11 and 12 in Jeremiah, Daniel's metaphor of the Babylonian military as a fast moving lion is obvious. Empires of the Fertile Crescent often used lions to symbolize the nation (e.g., the winged lions on the Isthara Gate of the city of Babylon).

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: LOCATION OF MT. SINAI

- A. If Moses was speaking literally and not figuratively of the three day journey he requested of Pharaoh (3:18; 5:3; 8:27), that was not a long enough time to get to the traditional site in the southern Sinai peninsula. Therefore, some scholars place the mountain near the oasis of Kadesh-Barnea.
- B. The traditional site called "Jebel Musa," in the Wilderness of Sin, has several things in its favor:
 1. A large plain before the mountain
 2. Deut. 1:2 says it was an eleven day journey from Mt. Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea,
 3. The term "Sinai" is a non-Hebrew term. It may be linked to the Wilderness of Sin, which refers to a small desert bush. The Hebrew name for the mountain is Horeb (wilderness).
 4. Mt. Sinai has been the traditional site since the 4th century A.D. It is in the "land of Midian" which included a large area of the Sinai peninsula and Arabia.

5. It seems that archaeology has confirmed the location of some of the cities mentioned in the Exodus account (*Elim, Dophkah, Rephidim*) as being on the western side of the Sinai Peninsula.

C. The traditional site of Mt. Sinai was not established until *Pilgrimage of Silvia*, written about A.D. 385-8 (cf. F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts*, p. 151).

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE LORD HARDENED

This seeming paradox has become the theological conflict between competing theological systems:

1. God's sovereignty - human free will
2. Augustine - Pelagius
3. Calvin - Arminius

For me both are biblical truths. Both truths must be held in a theological tension. The concept of "covenant" holds them together. God always comes first, sets the agenda, and calls to fallen mankind, e.g., John 6:44,65), but we are responsible for our choices (e.g., John 1:12; 3:16). Human responsibility and its consequences mandate a human freedom (i.e., soul competency)! Moral actions are based on real choices. The Scriptures assert both truths (i.e., theological poles)!

Notice God's sovereignty, "I have begun to deliver" and human free will, "begin to occupy, that you may possess the land"!

It is surely possible that this theological difficulty for us is predicated on our misunderstanding of ancient Hebrew theological idioms. Israel's unique monotheism demanded she defend it at all points. YHWH's cause of all things was a Hebrew way of affirming monotheism. Nothing just happened. There was one and only one cause—YHWH. The texts that assert this have caused moderns to:

1. attribute evil to God
2. assert a radical form of sovereignty to God

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: LOVINGKINDNESS (*HESED*)

This term has a wide semantic field. The BDB characterizes it this way (338-339):

A. Used in connection to human beings

1. kindness to fellow men (e.g., I Sam. 20:14; II Chr. 24:22)
2. kindness toward the poor and needy (e.g., Micah 6:8)
3. affection (cf. Jer. 2:2; Hos. 6:4)
4. appearance (cf. Isa. 40:6)

B. Used in connection to God

1. covenant loyalty and love
 - a. "in redemption from enemies and troubles" (e.g., Jer. 31:3; Ezra 27:28; 9:9)
 - b. "in preservation of life from death" (e.g., Job 10:12; Ps. 86:13)

- c. “in quickening of spiritual life” (e.g., Ps. 119:41,76,88,124,149,150)
 - d. “in redemption from sin” (cf. Ps. 25:7; 51:3)
 - e. “in keeping the covenants” (e.g., II Chr. 6:14; Neh. 1:5; 9:32)
2. describes a divine attribute (e.g., Exod. 34:6; Micah 7:20)
3. kindness of God
- a. “abundant” (e.g., Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8)
 - b. “great in extent” (e.g., Exod. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 7:9)
 - c. “everlasting” (e.g., I Chr. 16:34,41; II Chr. 5:13; 7:3,6; 20:21; Ezra 3:11)
4. deeds of kindness (e.g., II Chr. 6:42; Ps. 89:2; Isa. 55:3; 63:7; Lam. 3:22)

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: MATTHEW 27:9

“spoken through Jeremiah the prophet” This is a direct quote from Zech. 11:12-13. Jeremiah 18:1ff; 19:1ff and 32:7-9 also speak of a potter and Jer. 32:7-9 of buying a field. This has caused commentators great problems:

1. Augustine, Beza, Luther, and Keil said Matthew quoted the name Jeremiah in error.
2. The Peshitta, a 5th century A.D. Syriac translation and the Diatessaron simply removed the prophet’s name from the text.
3. Origen and Eusebius said a copyist caused the problem.
4. Jerome and Ewald said it is a quote from an apocryphal writing ascribed to Jeremiah.
5. Mede said Jeremiah wrote Zechariah, chapters 9-11.
6. Lightfoot and Scofield said Jeremiah was listed first in the Hebrew division of the canon known as “the prophets” and, therefore, his name stands for that section of the canon.
7. Hengstenberg said that Zechariah quoted Jeremiah.
8. Calvin said an error has crept into the text.
9. F. F. Bruce and a JB footnote said it was a composite quote from Zechariah and Jeremiah.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: MEDO-PERSIAN EMPIRE: SURVEY OF THE RISE OF CYRUS II (Isa. 41:2,25; 44:28-45:7; 46:11; 48:15)

- A. 625-585 - Cyaxares was the king of Media that helped Babylon defeat Assyria.
- B. 585-550 - Astyages was king of Media, Ecbatana was the capital). Cyrus II was his grandson by Cambyses I (600-559, Persian) and Mandane (daughter of Astyages, Median).
- C. 550-530 - Cyrus II of Ansham (eastern Elam) was a vassal king who revolted:
 1. Nabonidus, the Babylonian king, supported Cyrus.
 2. Astyages’ General Harpagus led his army to join Cyrus’ revolt.
 3. Cyrus II dethroned Astyages.
 4. Nabonidus, in order to restore a balance of power, made an alliance with:
 - a. Egypt
 - b. Croesus, King of Lydia (Asia Minor)

5. 547 - Cyrus II marched against Sardis (capital of Lydia) and it fell in 546 B.C.
6. 539 - In mid-October the generals Ugbaru and Gobryas, both of Gutium, with Cyrus' army took Babylon without resistance. Ugbaru was made governor, but died of war wounds within weeks, then Gobryas was made governor of Babylon.
7. 539 - In late October Cyrus II "the Great" personally entered as liberator. His policy of kindness to national groups reversed years of deportation as a national policy.
8. 538 - Jews and others of the Cyrus Cylinder were allowed to return home and rebuild their native temples (cf. II Chr. 36:22,23; Ezra 1:1-4). He also restored the vessels from YHWH's temple which Nebuchadnezzar had taken to Marduk's temple in Babylon (cf. Ezra 1:7-11; 6:5).
9. 530 - Cyrus' son, Cambyses II, succeeded him briefly as co-regent, but later the same year Cyrus died while on a military campaign.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: MOLECH

This YHWH prohibits the worship of *Molech* (BDB 574), the Canaanite (Ammon) fire god worshiped by sacrificing the first born child of every family in the community to insure fertility. His name (as used by Israelites) is a Hebrew pun on the consonants for "king" and the vowels for "shame." Israel is warned about this god early and often (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:2,3,4,5; I Kgs. 11:7; II Kgs. 23:10; Jer. 32:35; Micah 6:7). This worship was often characterized by the phrase "passing through the fire" (cf. 12:31; 18:10; II Kgs. 16:3; 17:17,31; 21:6; Ps. 106:37; Jer. 7:31; 19:5).

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: MOSES' AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH

I. Genesis

A. The Bible itself does not name the author. Genesis has no "I" sections like Ezra, Nehemiah or "we" sections like Acts.

B. Jewish tradition:

1. Ancient Jewish writers say Moses wrote it:

- a. Ben Sirach, Ecclesiasticus 24:23, written about 185 B.C.
- b. The *Baba Bathra* 14b, a part of the Talmud
- c. Philo of Alexandria, Egypt, a Jewish philosopher, writing just before Jesus' ministry
- d. Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian, writing just after Jesus' ministry.

2. The Torah is one unified historical account. After Genesis each book begins with the conjunction "and" (except Numbers).

3. This was a revelation to Moses

a. Moses is said to have written:

(1) Exodus 17:14

- (2) Exodus 24:4, 7
- (3) Exodus 34:27, 28
- (4) Numbers 33:2
- (5) Deuteronomy 31:9, 22, 24-26

b. God is said to have spoken through Moses:

- (1) Deuteronomy 5:4-5, 22
- (2) Deuteronomy 6:1
- (3) Deuteronomy 10:1

c. Moses is said to have spoken the words of the Torah to the people:

- (1) Deuteronomy 1:1, 3
- (2) Deuteronomy 5:1
- (3) Deuteronomy 27:1
- (4) Deuteronomy 29:2
- (5) Deuteronomy 31:1, 30
- (6) Deuteronomy 32:44
- (7) Deuteronomy 33:1

4. OT authors attribute it to Moses:

- a. Joshua 8:31
- b. II Kings 14:6
- c. Ezra 6:18
- d. Nehemiah 8:1; 13:1-2
- e. II Chronicles 25:4; 34:12; 35:12
- f. Daniel 9:11
- g. Malachi 4:4

C. Christian tradition

1. Jesus attributes quotes from the Torah to Moses:

- a. Matthew 8:4; 19:8
- b. Mark 1:44; 7:10; 10:5; 12:26
- c. Luke 5:14; 16:31; 20:37; 24:27, 44
- d. John 5:46-47; 7:19, 23

2. Other NT authors attribute quotes from the Torah to Moses:

- a. Luke 2:22
- b. Acts 3:22; 13:39; 15:1, 15-21; 26:22; 28:23
- c. Romans 10:5, 19
- d. I Corinthians 9:9
- e. II Corinthians 3:15
- f. Hebrews 10:28
- g. Revelation 15:3

3. Most early Church Fathers accepted Mosaic authorship. Ireneaus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Tertullian all had questions about Moses' relationship to the current canonical form of Genesis.

D. Modern Scholarship

1. There have obviously been some editorial additions to the Torah (seemingly to make the ancient work more understandable to contemporary readers):

- a. Genesis 12:6; 13:7; 14:14; 21:34; 32:32; 36:31; 47:11
- b. Exodus 11:3; 16:36
- c. Numbers 12:3; 13:22; 15:22-23; 21:14-15; 32:33ff
- d. Deuteronomy 3:14; 34:6
- e. Ancient scribes were highly trained and educated. Their techniques differed from country to country:

(1) in Mesopotamia they were very careful not to change anything, and even checked their works for accuracy. Here is an ancient Sumerian scribal footnote, ("the work is complete from beginning to end, has been copied, revised, compared, and verified sign by sign" from about 1400 B.C.)

(2) in Egypt they freely revised ancient texts to update them for contemporary readers. The scribes at Qumran followed this approach.

2. Scholars of the 19th Century theorized that the Torah is a composite document from many sources over an extended period of time (Graft-Wellhausen). This was based on the following:

- a. the different names for God,
- b. apparent doublets in the text,
- c. the form of the accounts,
- d. the theology of the accounts.

3. Supposed sources and dates:

- a. J source (use of YHWH), 950 b.c.
- b. E source (use of Elohim), 850 b.c.
- c. JE combined, 750 b.c.
- d. D source ("The Book of the Law," 22:8, discovered during Josiah's reform while remodeling the Temple was supposedly the book of Deuteronomy, written by an unknown priest of Josiah's time to support his reform.), 621 b.c.
- e. P source (all priestly material especially ritual and procedure), 400 b.c.
- f. There have obviously been editorial additions to the Torah. The Jews assert that it was:

(1) The High Priest at the time of the writing,

(2) Jeremiah the Prophet,

(3) Ezra the Scribe - IV Esdras says he rewrote it because the originals were destroyed in the Fall of Jerusalem in 586 b.c.

g. However, the J. E. D. P. theory says more about our modern literary theories and categories than evidence from the Torah ®. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 495-541 and *Tyndale Commentary Series*, “Leviticus,” pp. 15-25).

h. Characteristics of Hebrew Literature

- (1) Doublets, like Gen. 1 & 2, are common in Hebrew. Usually a general description is given and is then followed by a specific account. This may have been a way to accent truths or help oral memory.
- (2) The ancient rabbis said the two most common names for God have theological significance:
 - (a) YHWH - the Covenant name for Deity as He relates to Israel as Savior and Redeemer (cf. Ps. 103).
 - (b) Elohim - Deity as Creator, Provider, and Sustainer of all life on earth (cf. Ps. 104).
- (3) It is common in non-biblical Near Eastern Literature for a variety of styles and vocabulary to occur in unified literary works (Harrison, pp. 522-526).

E. The evidence from Ancient Near Eastern literature implies that Moses used written cuneiform documents or Mesopotamian style oral traditions to write Genesis. This in no way means to imply a lessening of inspiration but is an attempt to explain the literary phenomenon of the book of Genesis. Beginning in Gen. 37 a marked Egyptian influence of style, form and vocabulary seems to indicate Moses used either literary productions or oral traditions from the Israelites’ days in Egypt. Moses’ formal education was entirely Egyptian! The exact literary formation of the Pentateuch is uncertain. I believe that Moses is the compiler and author of the vast majority of the Pentateuch, though he may have used scribes and/or written and oral traditions. The historicity and trustworthiness of these first few books of the OT is certain.

II. Exodus

- A. The Torah is one unified account. Exodus starts with the conjunction “and.” See lengthy discussion in Genesis outline.
- B. There are several places in Exodus where it says that Moses wrote:

1. 17:14
2. 24:4, 12
3. 34:27, 28

C. Joshua 8:31 quotes Exodus 20:25 and attributes it to Moses. Jesus quotes Exod. 20:12,17 and

attributes it to Moses, Mark 7:10.

III. Numbers

- A. This is the first book of the Torah to name a written source, “The Book of the Wars of *Lord*,” 21:14-15. This clearly shows that Moses did use other written documents.
- B. This book states that Moses could and did record the events of the Wilderness Wandering Period.
- C. Numbers also provides several examples of obvious editorial additions (possibly Joshua or Samuel):
 - 1. 12:1,3
 - 2. 13:22
 - 3. 15:22-23
 - 4. 21:14-15
 - 5. 32:33ff
 - 6. 32:33ff
- D. In most cases Moses is referred to in the third person except in direct quotes. This implies Moses used scribal help in compiling these materials.
- E. It is interesting to notice that Numbers includes two non-Israelite literary productions: (1) the Amorite taunt poem in 21:27-30 (possibly v. 30 was an Israelite addition); and (2) Balaam’s conversations with Balak, King of Moab in 23-24. They do show the use of written or oral material included in the compilation of the book (cf. *The Book of the Wars of the Lord*).

IV. Deuteronomy

A. Jewish Tradition:

- 1. Ancient tradition is unanimous that the author was Moses.
- 2. This is stated in:
 - a. Talmud - Baba Bathra 14b
 - b. Mishnah
 - c. Ben Sirach’s Ecclesiasticus 24:23 (written about 185 B.C.)
 - d. Philo of Alexandria
 - e. Flavius Josephus
- 3. The Scripture itself:
 - a. Judges 3:4 and Joshua 8:31
 - b. “Moses spoke”:
 - (1) Deut. 1:1, 3
 - (2) Deut. 5:1
 - (3) Deut. 27:1
 - (4) Deut. 29:2
 - (5) Deut. 31:1, 30
 - (6) Deut. 32:44
 - (7) Deut. 33:1
 - c. “YHWH spoke to Moses”:

- (1) Deut. 5:4-5, 22
- (2) Deut. 6:1
- (3) Deut. 10:1

d. "Moses wrote":

- (1) Deut. 31:9, 22, 24
- (2) Exodus 17:14
- (3) Exodus 24:4, 12
- (4) Exodus 34:27-28
- (5) Numbers 33:2

e. Jesus quotes from or alludes to Deuteronomy and states "Moses said"/"Moses wrote":

- (1) Matthew 19:7-9; Mark 10:4-5 - Deut. 24:1-4
- (2) Mark 7:10 - Deut. 5:16
- (3) Luke 16:31; 24:27, 44; John 5:46-47; 7:19, 23

f. Paul asserts Moses as author:

- (1) Romans 10:19 - Deut. 32:21
- (2) I Cor. 9:9 - Deut. 25:4
- (3) Gal. 3:10 - Deut. 27:26
- (4) Acts 26:22; 28:23

g. Peter asserts Moses as author in his Pentecostal sermon - Acts 3:22

h. The author of Hebrews asserts Moses as author - Hebrews 10:28 - Deut. 17:2-6

B. Modern Scholarship

1. Many of the 18th- and 19th-century theologians, following the Graf-Wellhausen theory of multiple authorship (J.E.D.P.), assert that Deuteronomy was written by a priest/prophet during Josiah's reign in Judah to support his spiritual reform. This would mean that the book was written in Moses' name about 621 B.C.

2. They base this on:

- a. II Kings 22:8; II Chr. 34:14-15, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD"
- b. chapter 12 discussed a single site for the Tabernacle and later Temple
- c. chapter 17 discussed a later king
- d. it is true that writing a book in the name of a famous person from the past was common in the Ancient Near East and in Jewish circles
- e. there are similarities of style, vocabulary and grammar between Deut. and Joshua, Kings and Jeremiah
- f. Deuteronomy records the death of Moses, chapter 34
- g. there are obvious later editorial additions in the Pentateuch:

- (1) Deuteronomy 3:14
- (2) Deuteronomy 34:6

- h. the sometimes unexplainable variety in the use of the names of deity:
El, El Shaddai, Elohim, YHWH, in seemingly
unified contexts and historical periods

V. Conclusion

Ancient tradition and archaeology give credible evidence that Moses was the editor/author behind Genesis - Deuteronomy. He may have used oral and written sources also, as well as scribes to produce this biblical literature. It is obvious that later scribes or prophets updated the text for their generations.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: “THE NAME” OF YHWH

The use of “the name” as a substitute for YHWH Himself is parallel to the Exod. 23:20-33 use of “angel,” who is said to have “My name is in Him.” This same substitution can be seen in the use of “His glory” (e.g., John 1:14; 17:22). All are attempts to soften the personal anthropomorphic presence of YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:13-16; 6:3). YHWH is surely spoken of in human terms, but it was also known that He was spiritually present throughout creation (cf. I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 139:7-16; Jer. 23:24; Acts 7:49 quotes Isa. 66:1).

There are several examples of “the name” representing YHWH’s divine essence and personal presence:

1. Deut. 12:5; II Sam. 7:13; I Kgs. 9:3; 11:36
2. Deut. 28:58
3. Ps. 5:11; 7:17; 9:10; 33:21; 68:4; 91:14; 103:1; 105:3; 145:21
4. Isa. 48:9; 56:6
5. Ezek. 20:44; 36:21; 39:7
6. Amos 2:7
7. John 17:6, 11, 26

The concept of “calling on” (i.e., worshiping) the name of YHWH is seen early in Genesis:

1. 4:26, the line of Seth
2. 12:8, Abraham
3. 13:4, Abraham
4. 16:13, Hagar
5. 21:33, Abraham
6. 26:25, Isaac

and in Exodus:

1. 5:22, speak in Thy name
2. 9:16, show My name through all the earth (cf. Rom. 9:17)
3. 20:7, do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain (cf. Lev. 19:12; Deut. 5:11; 6:13; 10:20)
4. 20:24, where I cause my name to be remembered (cf. Deut. 12:5; 26:2)
5. 23:20-21, an angel (“since My name is in him”)
6. 34:5-7, Moses calls on (or “called out”) the name of the Lord. This is one of a handful of texts that describe YHWH’s character (cf. Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8; Joel 2:13)

Knowing someone by name implies an intimacy (cf. Exod. 33:12), Moses knows YHWH’s name and in 33:17, YHWH knows Moses’ name. This is the context where Moses wants to see God’s glory (cf. v. 18), but God allows him to see “His goodness” (v. 19), which is parallel to “the name” (v. 19).

The Israelites are to destroy “the names” of Canaan’s gods (cf. Deut. 12:3) and call on Him (cf. Deut. 6:13; 10:20; 26:2) at the special place He causes His name to dwell (cf. Exod. 20:24; Deut. 12:5,11,21; 14:23,24; 16:2,6,11; 26:2).

YHWH has a universal purpose involving His name:

1. Gen. 12:3
2. Exod. 9:16
3. Exod. 19:5-6
4. Deut. 28:10,58
5. Micah 4:1-5

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAMES FOR DEITY

A. *El*

1. The original meaning of the generic ancient term for deity is uncertain, though many scholars believe it comes from the Akkadian root, “to be strong” or “to be powerful” (cf. Gen. 17:1; Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:21; Ps. 50:1).
2. In the Canaanite pantheon the high god is El (Ras Shamra texts)
3. In the Bible El is not usually compounded with other terms. These combinations became a way to characterize God.

- a. *El-Elyon* (God Most High), Gen. 14:18-22; Deut. 32:8; Isa. 14:14
- b. *El-Roi* (“God who sees” or “God who reveals Himself”), Gen. 16:13
- c. *El-Shaddai* (“God Almighty” or “God the All Compassion” or “God of the mountain”), Gen. 17:1; 35:11; 43:14; 49:25; Exod. 6:3
- d. *El-Olam* (the Everlasting God), Gen. 21:33. This term is theologically linked to God’s promise to David, II Sam. 7:13,16
- e. *El-Berit* (“God of the Covenant”), Jdgs. 9:46

4. El is equated with

- a. YHWH in Ps. 85:8; Isa. 42:5
- b. *Elohim* in Gen. 46:3; Job 5:8, “I am *El*, the *Elohim* of your father
- c. *Shaddai* in Gen. 49:25
- d. “jealousy” in Exod. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15
- e. “mercy” in Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:31; “faithful” in Deut. 7:9; 32:4
- f. “great and awesome” in Deut. 7:21; 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Dan. 9:4
- g. “knowledge” in I Sam. 2:3
- h. “my strong refuge” in II Sam. 22:33
- i. “my avenger” in II Sam. 22:48
- j. “holy one” in Isa. 5:16
- k. “might” in Isa. 10:21
- l. “my salvation” in Isa. 12:2
- m. “great and powerful” in Jer. 32:18
- n. “retribution: in Jer. 51:56

5. A combination of all the major OT names for God is found in Joshua 22:22 (*El*, *Elohim*, *YHWH*, repeated)

B. *Elyon*

1. Its basic meaning is “high,” “exalted,” or “lifted up” (cf. Gen. 40:17; I Kgs. 9:8; II Kgs. 18:17; Neh. 3:25; Jer. 20:2; 36:10; Ps. 18:13).
2. It is used in a parallel sense to several other names/titles of God.
 - a. *Elohim* - Ps. 47:1-2; 73:11; 107:11
 - b. *YHWH* - Gen. 14:22; II am. 22:14
 - c. *El-Shaddai* - Ps. 91:1,9
 - d. *El* - Num. 24:16
 - e. *Elah* - used often in Daniel 2-6 and Ezra 4-7, linked with *illair* (Aramaic for “High God”) in Dan. 3:26; 4:2; 5:18,21
3. It is often used by non Israelites.

- a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
- b. Balaam, Num. 24:16
- c. Moses, speaking of the nations in Deut. 32:8
- d. Luke’s Gospel in the NT, writing to Gentiles, also uses the Greek equivalent *Hupsistos* (cf. 1:32,35,76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; 16:17)

C. *Elohim* (plural), *Eloah* (singular), used primarily in poetry

1. This term is not found outside the Old Testament.
2. This word can designate the God of Israel or the gods of the nations (cf. Exod. 12:12; 20:3). Abraham’s family were polytheistic (cf. Josh. 24:2).
3. It can refer to Israeli judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6).
4. The term *elohim* is also used of other spiritual beings (angels, the demonic) as in Deut. 32:8 (LXX); Ps. 8:5; Job 1:6; 38:7. It can refer to human judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6)
5. In the Bible it is the first title/name for deity (cf. Gen. 1:1). It is used exclusively until Gen. 2:4, where it is combined with *YHWH*. It basically (theologically) refers to God as creator, sustainer, and provider of all life on this planet (cf. Ps. 104). It is synonymous with *El* (cf. Deut. 32:15-19). It can also parallel *YHWH* as Ps. 14 (*elohim*) is exactly like Ps. 53 (*YHWH*), except for the change in divine names.
6. Although PLURAL and used of other gods, this term often designates the God of Israel, but usually it has the SINGULAR VERB to denote the monotheistic usage.
7. This term is found in the mouths of non-Israelites as the name for deity.

- a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
- b. Balaam, Num. 24:2
- c. Moses, when speaking of the nations, Deut. 32:8

8. It is strange that a common name for the monotheistic God of Israel is plural! Although there is no certainty, here are the theories.

- a. Hebrew has many PLURALS, often used for emphasis. Closely related to this is the later Hebrew grammatical feature called “the plural of majesty,” where the PLURAL is used to magnify a concept.
- b. This may refer to the angelic council, which God meets with in heaven and that does His bidding (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6; Ps. 82:1; 89:5,7).
- c. It is even possible this reflects the NT revelation of the one God in three persons. In Gen. 1:1 God creates; Gen. 1:2 the Spirit broods and from the NT Jesus is God the Father’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; Rom. 11:36; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2; 2:10).

D. YHWH

1. This is the name which reflects deity as the covenant making God; God as savior, redeemer! Humans break covenants, but God is loyal to His word, promise, covenant (cf. Ps. 103).

This name is first mentioned in combination with *Elohim* in Gen. 2:4. There are not two creation accounts in Gen. 1-2, but two emphases: (1) God as the creator of the universe (the physical) and (2) God as the special creator of humanity. Genesis 2:4 begins

the special revelation about the privileged position and purpose of mankind, as well as the problem of sin and rebellion associated with the unique position.

2. In Gen. 4:26 it is said “*men* began to call upon the name of the LORD ” (YHWH). However, Exod. 6:3 implies that early covenant people (the Patriarchs and their families) knew God only as *El-Shaddai*. The name YHWH is explained only one time in Exod. 3:13-16, esp. v. 14. However, the writings of Moses often interpret words by popular word plays, not etymologies (cf. Gen. 17:5; 27:36; 29:13-35). There have been several theories as to the meaning of this name (taken from IDB, vol. 2, pp. 409-11).

- a. from an Arabic root, “to show fervent love”
- b. from an Arabic root “to blow” (YHWH as storm God)
- c. from a Ugartic (Canaanite) root “to speak”
- d. following a Phoenician inscription, a CAUSATIVE PARTICIPLE meaning “the One who sustains,” or “the One who establishes”
- e. from the Hebrew *Qal* form “the One who is,” or “the One who is present” (in future sense, “the One who will be”)
- f. from the Hebrew *Hiphil* form “the One who causes to be”
- g. from the Hebrew root “to live” (e.g., Gen. 3:20), meaning “the ever living, only living One”
- h. from the context of Exod. 3:13-16 a play on the IMPERFECT form used in a PERFECT sense, “I shall continue to be what I used to be” or “I shall continue to be what I have always been” (cf. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Old Testament*, p. 67)
The full name YHWH is often expressed in abbreviation or possibly an original form

- (1) *Yah* (e.g., Hallelu - yah)
- (2) *Yahu* (names, e.g., Isaiah)
- (3) *Yo* (names, e.g., Joel)

3. In later Judaism this covenant name became so holy (the tetragrammaton) that Jews were afraid to say it lest they break the command of Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 6:13. So they substituted the Hebrew term for “owner,” “master,” “husband,” “lord”—*adon* or *adonai* (my lord). When they came to YHWH in their reading of OT texts they pronounced “lord.” This is why YHWH is written LORD in English translations.
4. As with *El*, often YHWH is combined with other terms to emphasize certain characteristics of the Covenant God of Israel. While there are many possible combinations terms, here are some.

- a. *YHWH - Yireh* (YHWH will provide), Gen. 22:14
- b. *YHWH - Rophekha* (YHWH is your healer), Exod. 15:26
- c. *YHWH - Nissi* (YHWH is my banner), Exod. 17:15

- d. *YHWH - Meqaddishkem* (YHWH the One who sanctifies you), Exod. 31:13
- e. *YHWH - Shalom* (YHWH is Peace), Jdgs. 6:24
- f. *YHWH - Sabbaoth* (YHWH of hosts), I Sam. 1:3,11; 4:4; 15:2; often in the Prophets)
- g. *YHWH - Ro'I* (YHWH is my shepherd), Ps. 23:1
- h. *YHWH - Sidqenu* (YHWH is our righteousness), Jer. 23:6
- i. *YHWH - Shammah* (YHWH is there), Ezek. 48:35

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: NATURAL RESOURCES

I. Introduction

- A. All creation is the backdrop or stage for God's love affair with mankind.
- B. It shares in the fall (cf. Gen. 3:17; 6:1ff; Rom. 8:18-20). Also, it will share in eschatological redemption (cf. Isa. 11:6-9; Rom. 8:20-22; Rev. 21-22).
- C. Sinful, fallen mankind has raped the natural environment with selfish abandon. Following is a quote from *The Canon of Westminster* by Edward Carpenter.
 - “. . . man's relentless assault, in a global context, upon the universe around him—that is on God's creation—an attack on the air which he pollutes; the natural waterways which he befouls; the soil which he poisons; the forests which he hews down, heedless of the long-term affects of this wanton destruction. This attack is piecemeal and uncoordinated. Scant regard is paid to any balance of nature and consequently little sense of responsibility for what one generation owes to another.”
- D. not only are we reaping the result of pollution and exploitation of our planet, but our posterity will reap even more severe, non-reversible consequences.

II. Biblical Material

A. Old Testament

1. Genesis 1-3

- a. Creation is a special place created by God for fellowship with mankind (cf. Gen. 1:1-25).
- b. Creation is good (cf. Gen. 1:4,10,12,18,21,25), yea, very good (cf. Gen. 1:31). It is meant to be a witness to God (cf. Ps. 19:1-16).
- c. Humanity is the crowning purpose of creation (cf. Gen. 1:26-27).
- d. Humanity was meant to exercise dominion (Hebrew, “to tread”) as a steward to God (cf. Gen. 1:28-30; Ps. 8:3-8; Heb. 2:6-8). God is and remains the Creator/Sustainer/Redeemer/Lord of creation (cf. Exod. 19:5; Job 37-41; Ps. 24:1-2; 95:3-5; 102:25; 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 146:6; Isa. 37:16).
- e. Mankind's stewardship of creation can be seen in Gen. 2:15, “to cultivate it and preserve and protect it” (cf. Lev. 25:23; I Chron. 29:14).

2. God loves creation, especially animals.

- a. Mosaic laws for proper treatment of animals
- b. YHWH playing with Leviathan (cf. Ps. 104:26)
- c. God cares for animals (cf. Jonah 4:11)
- d. Eschatological presence of nature (cf. Isa. 11:6-9; Rev. 21-22)

3. Nature, to some extent, glorifies God.

- a. Psalm 19:1-6
- b. Psalm 29:1-9
- c. Job 37-41

4. Nature is one means by which God shows His love and loyalty to the covenant.

- a. Deut. 27-28; I Kings 17
- b. Throughout the prophets

B. New Testament

1. God is seen as creator. There is only one Creator, the Triune God (Elohim, Gen. 1:1; the Spirit, Gen. 1:2; and Jesus, the NT). All else is created.

- a. Acts 17:24
- b. Hebrews 11:3
- c. Revelation 4:11

2. Jesus is God's agent of creation

- a. John 1:3,10
- b. I Cor. 8:6
- c. Col. 1:16
- d. Heb. 1:2

3. Jesus speaks of God's care for nature in an indirect way in His sermons

- a. Matt. 6:26,28-30, birds of the air and lilies of the field
- b. Matt. 10:29, sparrows

4. Paul asserts that all humans are responsible for their knowledge of God in creation (i.e natural revelation, cf. Rom. 1:19-20; Rev. 21-22).

III. Conclusion

A. We are bound to this natural order!

B. Sinful mankind has abused God's gift of nature as they have all the other good gifts of God.

C. This natural order is temporal. It is going to pass away (II Pet. 3:7). God is moving our world to a historical nexus. Sin will run its course, but God has determined its bounds. Creation will be redeemed (cf. Rom. 8:18-25).

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

Twelve has always been a symbolic number of organization:

1. outside the Bible

- a. twelve signs of the Zodiac
- b. twelve months of the year

2. in the OT

- a. the sons of Jacob (the Jewish tribes)
- b. reflected in
 - (1) twelve pillars of the altar in Exod. 24:4
 - (2) twelve jewels on the high priest's breastplate (which stand for the tribes) in Exod. 28:21
 - (3) twelve loaves of bread in the holy place of the tabernacle in Lev. 24:5
 - (4) twelve spies sent into Canaan in Num. 13 (one from each tribe)
 - (5) twelve rods (tribal standards) at Korah's rebellion in Num. 17:2
 - (6) twelve stones of Joshua in Josh. 4:3,9,20
 - (7) twelve administrative districts in Solomon's administration in I Kgs. 4:7
 - (8) twelve stones of Elijah's altar to YHWH in I Kgs. 18:31

3. in the NT

- a. twelve apostles chosen
- b. twelve baskets of bread (one for each Apostle) in Matt. 14:20
- c. twelve thrones on which NT disciples sit (referring to the 12 tribes of Israel) in Matt. 19:28
- d. twelve legions of angels to rescue Jesus in Matt. 26:53
- e. the symbolism of Revelation
 - (1) 24 elders on 24 thrones in 4:4
 - (2) 144,000 (12x12) in 7:4; 14:1,3
 - (3) twelve stars on the woman's crown in 12:1
 - (4) twelve gates, twelve angels reflecting the twelve tribes in 21:12
 - (5) twelve foundation stones of the new Jerusalem and on them the names of the twelve Apostles in 21:14
 - (6) twelve thousand stadia in 21:16 (size of new city, New Jerusalem)
 - (7) wall is 144 cubits in 21:7
 - (8) twelve gates of pearl in 21:21
 - (9) trees in new Jerusalem with twelve kinds of fruit (one for each month) in 22:2

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE OLD TESTAMENT AS HISTORY

Christianity and Judaism are historical faiths. They base their faith on historical events (accompanied by their interpretations). The problem comes in trying to define or describe what is "history" or "historical study." Much of the problem in modern theological interpretation rests on modern literary or historical assumptions projected back onto ancient Near Eastern biblical literature. Not only is there not a proper appreciation of the temporal and cultural differences, but also of the literary differences. As modern western people we simply do not understand the genres and literary techniques of ancient Near Eastern writings, so we interpreted them in light of western literary genres.

The nineteenth century's approach to biblical studies atomized and depreciated the books of the Old Testament as

historical, unified documents. This historical scepticism has affected hermeneutics and historical investigation of the Old Testament. The current trend toward “canonical hermeneutics” (Brevard Childs) has helped focus on the current form of the Old Testament text. This, in my opinion, is a helpful bridge over the abyss of German higher criticism of the nineteenth century. We must deal with the canonical text that has been given us by an unknown historical process whose inspiration is assumed.

Many scholars are returning to the assumption of the historicity of the OT. This is surely not meant to deny the obvious editing and updating of the OT by later Jewish scribes, but it is a basic return to the OT as a valid history and the documentation of true events (with their theological interpretations).

A quote from R. K. Harrison in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, in the article, “Historical and Literary Criticism of the Old Testament” is helpful:

“Comparative historiographic studies have shown that, along with the Hittites, the ancient Hebrews were the most accurate, objective, and responsible recorders of Near Eastern history. . Form-critical studies of books such as Genesis and Deuteronomy, based on specific types of tablets recovered from sites that include Mari, Nuzi, and Boghazköy, have shown that the canonical material has certain nonliterary counterparts in the cultures of some Near Eastern peoples. As a result, it is possible to view with a new degree of confidence and respect those early traditions of the Hebrews that purport to be historiographic in nature” (p. 232).

I am especially appreciative of R. K. Harrison's work because he makes it a priority to interpret the Old Testament in light of contemporary events, cultures and genres.

In my own classes on early Jewish literature (Genesis - Deuteronomy and Joshua), I try to establish a credible link with other ancient Near Eastern literature and artifacts:

A. Genesis literary parallels from the ancient Near East

1. Earliest known literary parallel of the cultural setting of Genesis 1-11 is the Ebla cuneiform tablets from northern Syria dating about 2500 B.C., written in Akkadian.

2. Creation

- a. The closest Mesopotamian account dealing with creation, *Enuma Elish*, dating from about 1900-1700 B.C., was found in Ashurbanipal's library at Nineveh and several other places. There are seven cuneiform tablets written in Akkadian which describe creation by Marduk.

- 1) the gods, *Apsu* (fresh water-male) and *Tiamat* (salt water-female) had unruly, noisy children. These two gods tried to silence the younger gods.

- 2) one of the god's children, *Marduk*, helped defeat *Tiamat*. He formed the earth from her body.

- 3) *Marduk* formed humanity from another defeated god, *Kingu*, who was the male consort of *Tiamat* after the death of *Apsu*. Humanity came from *Kingu's* blood.

- 4) *Marduk* was made chief of the Babylonian pantheon.

- b. “The creation seal” is a cuneiform tablet which is a picture of a naked man and woman beside a fruit tree with a snake wrapped around the tree's trunk and positioned over the woman's shoulder as if talking to her.

3. Creation and Flood - *The Atrahasis Epic* records the rebellion of the lesser gods because of overwork and the creation of seven human couples to perform the duties of these lesser gods. Because of (1) over population and (2) noise, human beings were reduced in number by a plague, two famines and finally a flood, planned by *Enlil*. These major events are seen in the same order in Gen. 1-8. This cuniform composition dates from about the same times as *Enuma Elish* and the *Gilgamesh Epic*, about 1900-1700 B.C. All are in Akkadian.

4. Noah's flood

- c. A Summerian tablet from Nippur, called *Eridu Genesis*, dating from about 1600 B.C., tells about *Zivsudra* and a coming flood.

- 1) *Enka*, the water god, warned of a coming flood
- 2) *Zivsudra*, a king-priest, saved in a huge boat
- 3) The flood lasted seven days
- 4) *Zivsudra* opened a window on the boat and released several birds to see if dry land had appeared
- 5) He also offered a sacrifice of an ox and sheep when he left the boat

- d. A composite Babylonian flood account from four Summerian tales, known as the *Gilgamesh Epic*, originally dating from about 2500-2400 B.C., although the written composite form was cuniform Akkadian, is much later. It tells about a flood survivor, *Utnapishtim*, who tells *Gilgamesh*, the king of *Uruk* how he survived the great flood and was granted eternal life.

- 1) *Ea*, the water god, warns of a coming flood and tells *Utnapishtim* (Babylonian form of *Zivsudra*) to build a boat
- 2) *Utnapishtim* and his family, along with selected healing plants, survived the flood
- 3) The flood lasted seven days
- 4) The boat came to rest in northeast Persia, on Mt. Nisir
- 5) He sent out three different birds to see if dry land had yet appeared

4. The Mesopotamian literature which describes an ancient flood draws from the same source. The names often vary, but the plot is the same. An example is that *Zivsudra*, *Atrahasis*, and *Utnapishtim* are all the same human king.

5. The historical parallels to the early events of Genesis can be explained in light of man's pre-dispersion (Genesis 10-11) knowledge and experience of God. These true historical core memories have been elaborated and mythologicalized into the current flood accounts common throughout the world. The same can also be said of: creation (Genesis 1-2) and human and angelic unions (Genesis 6).

6. Patriarch's Day (Middle Bronze)

- a. Mari tablets - cuniform legal (Ammonite culture) and personal texts written in Akkadian from about 1700 B.C.
- b. Nuzi tablets - cuniform archives of certain families (Horite or Hurrian culture) written in Akkadian from about 100 miles SE of Nineveh about 1500-1300 B.C. They record family and business procedures. For further specific examples, see Walton, pp. 52-58.
- c. Alalak tablets - cuniform texts from Northern Syria from about 2000 B.C.
- d. Some of the names found in Genesis are named as place names in the Mari Tablets: Serug, Peleg, Terah, Nahor. Other biblical names were also common: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Laban, and Joseph.

7. "Comparative historiographic studies have shown that, along with the Hittites, the ancient Hebrews were the most accurate, objective and responsible recorders of Near Eastern history," R. K Harrison in *Biblical Criticism*, p. 5.
8. Archaeology has proven to be so helpful in establishing the historicity of the Bible. However, a word of caution is necessary. Archaeology is not an absolutely trustworthy guide because of:

- a. poor techniques in early excavations,
- b. various, very subjective interpretations of the artifacts that have been discovered,
- c. no agreed-upon chronology of the Ancient Near East (although one is being developed from tree rings)

B. Egyptian creation accounts can be found in John W. Walton's, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990. pp. 23-34, 32-34.

1. In Egyptian literature creation began with an unstructured, chaotic, primeval water. Creation was seen as developing structure out of watery chaos.
2. In Egyptian literature from Memphis, creation occurred by the spoken word of Ptah.

C. Joshua literary parallels from the ancient Near East

1. Archaeology has shown that most of the large walled cities of Canaan were destroyed and rapidly rebuilt about 1250 B.C.
 - a. Hazor
 - b. Lachish
 - c. Bethel
 - d. Debir (formerly called Keriath Sepher, 15:15)
2. Archaeology has not been able to confirm or reject the biblical account of the fall of Jericho (cf. Joshua 6). This is because the site is in such poor condition:
 - a. weather/location
 - b. later rebuildings on old sites using older materials
 - c. uncertainty as to the dates of the layers
3. Archaeology has found an altar on Mt. Ebal that might be connected to Joshua 8:30-31 (Deuteronomy. 27:2-9). It is very similar to a description found in the Mishnah (Talmud).
4. The Ras Shamra texts found at Ugarit show Canaanite life and religion of 1400's B.C.:
 - a. polytheistic nature worship (fertility cult)
 - b. El was chief deity
 - c. El's consort was Asherah (later she is consort to Ba'al) who was worshiped in the form of a carved stake or live tree, which symbolized "the tree of life"
 - d. their son was Ba'al (Haddad), the storm god
 - e. Ba'al became the "high god" of the Canaanite pantheon. Anat was his consort
 - f. ceremonies similar to Isis and Osiris of Egypt
 - g. Ba'al worship was focused on local "high places" or stone platforms (ritual prostitution),
 - h. Ba'al was symbolized by a raised stone pillar (phallic symbol)
5. The accurate listing of the names of ancient cities fits a contemporary author, not later

editor(s):

- a. Jerusalem called Jebus, 15:8; 18:16,28 (15:28 said the Jebusites still remained in part of Jerusalem)
- b. Hebron called Kiriath-arba, 14:15; 15:13,54; 20:7; 21:11
- c. Kiriath-jearim is called Baalah, 15:9,10
- d. Sidon is referred to as the major Phoenician city, not Tyre, 11:8; 13:6; 19:28, which later became the chief city

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE OT FOOD LAWS

In my opinion, these food laws (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14) are not given primarily for health or hygienic reasons (i.e., Maimonides, *Guide* 3:48; *Kiddushin* 49b [Talmudic tractate]), but for theological reasons. Israelis are to have no contact with Canaanites (cf. Isa. 65:4; 66:3,17). Many of the regulations given to Israel through Moses relate to Canaanite eating, socializing, and worshiping practices (e.g., Exod. 8:23).

On the question of “are these food laws binding or even helpful for NT believers,” I would say No! No! No! Here are my reasons:

1. Jesus rejected the food laws as a way to approach and please God, Mark 7:14-23 (surely the editorial comment by either Peter or John Mark in v. 19 is equally inspired)
2. This very question was the issue of the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, where it was decided that Gentiles did not have to follow OT cultic laws (cf. esp. v. 19). Verse 20 is not a food law, but a fellowship concession to believing Jews who may be in their Gentile churches.
3. Peter’s experience in Acts 10 in Joppa is not about food, but about the acceptability of all people, yet the Spirit used the food law’s irrelevance as the symbol to teach Peter!
4. Paul’s discussion of “weak” and “strong” believers cautions us not to force our personal interpretation, particularly of OT laws, on all other believers (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; I Corinthians 8-10).
5. Paul’s warnings about legalism and judgmentalism in relation to the Gnostic false teachers recorded in Col. 2:16-23 ought to be a warning to all believers in every age!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: OLD TESTAMENT HISTORIOGRAPHY COMPARED WITH CONTEMPORARY NEAR EASTERN CULTURES

Mesopotamian sources

1. Like most ancient literature the subject is usually the king or some national hero.
2. The events are often embellished for propaganda purposes.
3. Usually nothing negative is recorded.
4. The purpose was to support current status quo institutions or explain the rise of new regimes.
5. The historical distortions involve
 - a. embellished claims of great victories,
 - b. earlier achievements presented as current achievements,
 - c. only positive aspects recorded

6. The literature served not only a propagandistic function, but was also a didactic function

Egyptian sources

1. They support a very static view of life, which was not affected by time.
2. The king and his family are the object of much of the literature.
3. It, like Mesopotamian literature, is very propagandistic

- a. no negative aspects
- b. embellished aspects

Rabbinical sources (later)

1. Attempt to make Scripture relevant by Midrash, which moves from the faith of the interpreter to text and does not focus on authorial intent nor historical setting of the text
 - a. *Halakha* deals with truths or rules for life
 - b. *Haggada* deals with application and encouragement for life
2. Peshet - later development seen in Dead Sea Scrolls. It used a typological approach to see the prophetic fulfillment of past events in the current setting. The current setting was the prophesied eschaton (coming new age)

It is obvious that ancient Near Eastern genres and later Jewish literature are different from Old Testament Scripture. In many ways the genres of the OT, though often sharing characteristics of contemporary literature, are unique, especially in their depiction of historical events. The closest to Hebrew historiography is the Hittite literature.

It must be acknowledged how different ancient historiography is from modern, western historiography. Herein lies the problem for interpretation. Modern historiography attempts to be objective (non-propaganda, if this is possible) and to document and record in chronological sequence what “really happened!” It attempts to document “cause and effect” of historical events. It is characterized by details!

Just because Near Eastern histories are not like modern histories does not make them wrong, inferior, or untrustworthy. Western modern histories reflect the biases (presuppositions) of their writers. Biblical history is by its very nature (inspiration) different. There is a sense in which biblical history is seen through the eyes of the faith of the inspired author and for the purposes of theology, but it is still a valid historical account.

This historicity of the Old Testament is important to me as a way of advocating my faith to others. If the Bible can be demonstrated to be historical then its faith claims have stronger appeal to non-believers. My faith does not rest on the historical confirmation of archaeology and anthropology, but these help to introduce the message of the Bible, and to give it a credibility that otherwise it would not have.

To summarize then, historicity does not function in the area of inspiration, but in the area of apologetics and evangelism.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: GENRE AND INTERPRETATION: OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE

I. OPENING STATEMENTS

A. The relationship between the OT and other ways of the chronicling of events

1. Other ancient Near Eastern literature is mythological
 - a. polytheistic (usually humanistic gods reflecting the powers of nature but using interpersonal conflict motifs)
 - b. Based on the cycles of nature (dying and rising gods)

2. Greco-Roman is for entertainment and encouragement rather than the recording of historical events per se (Homer in many ways reflects Mesopotamian motifs)
- B. Possibly the use of three German terms illustrates the difference in types or definitions of history
1. “Historie,” the recording of events (bare facts)
 2. “Geschichte,” the interpretation of events showing their significance to mankind
 3. “Heilsgeschichte” refers uniquely to God’s redemptive plan and activity within the historical process
- C. The OT and NT narratives are “Geschichte” which leads to an understanding of Heilgeschichte They are selected theologically oriented historical events
1. selected events only
 2. chronology not as significant as theology
 3. events shared to reveal truth
- D. Narrative is the most common genre in the OT. It has been estimated that 40% of the OT is narrative. Therefore, this genre is useful to the Spirit in communicating God’s message and character to fallen mankind. But, it is done, not propositionally (like the NT Epistles), but by implication, summation or selected dialog/monolog. One must continue to ask why this is recorded. What is it trying to emphasize? What is its theological purpose?
- This in no way is meant to depreciate the history. But, it is history as the servant and channel of revelation.

II. Biblical Narratives

- A. God is active in His world. Inspired Bible authors chose certain events to reveal God. God is the major character of the OT.
- B. Every narrative functions in several ways:
1. who is God and what is He doing in His world
 2. mankind is revealed through God’s dealing with individuals and national entities
 3. as an example specifically notice Joshua’s military victory linked to covenant performance (cf. 1:7-8; 8:30-35).
- C. Often narratives are strung together to make a larger literary unit which reveals a single theological truth.

III. Interpretive principles of OT narratives

- A. The best discussion I have seen about interpreting OT narratives is by Douglas Stuart in *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 83-84
1. An OT narrative usually does not directly teach a doctrine.
 2. An OT narrative usually illustrates a doctrine or doctrines taught propositionally elsewhere.
 3. Narratives record what happened—not necessarily what should have happened or what ought to happen every time. Therefore, not every narrative has an individual identifiable moral of the story.
 4. What people do in narratives is not necessarily a good example for us. Frequently, it is just the opposite.

5. Most of the characters in OT narratives are far from perfect, and their actions also
6. We are not always told at the end of a narrative whether what happened was good or bad. We are expected to be able to judge that on the basis of what God has taught us directly and categorically elsewhere in the Scripture.
7. *All* narratives are selective and incomplete. Not all the relevant details are always given (cf. John 21:25). What does appear in the narrative is everything that the inspired author thought important for us to know.
8. Narratives are not written to answer all our theological questions. They have particular, specific, limited purposes and deal with certain issues, leaving others to be dealt with elsewhere, in other ways.
9. Narratives may teach either explicitly (by clearly stating something) or implicitly (by clearly implying something without actually stating it).
10. In the final analysis, God is the hero of all biblical narratives.

B. Another good discussion on interpreting narratives is in Walter Kaiser's *Toward Exegetical Theology*:

“The unique aspect of the narrative portions of Scripture is that the writer usually allows the words and actions of the people in his narrative to convey the main thrust of his message. Thus, instead of addressing us through direct statements, such as are found in doctrinal or teaching portions of Scripture, the writer tends to remain instead somewhat in the background as far as direct teaching or evaluative statements are concerned. Consequently, it becomes critically important to recognize the larger context in which the narrative fits and to ask why the writer used the specific selection of events in the precise sequence in which he placed them. The twin clues to meaning now will be *arrangement* of episodes and *selection* of detail from a welter of possible speeches, persons, or episodes. Furthermore, the divine reaction to and estimate of these people and events must often be determined from the way the author allows one person or a group of people to respond at the climax of the selected sequence of events; that is, if he has not interrupted the narration to give his own (in this instance, God's) estimate of what has taken place” (p. 205).

C. In narratives the truth is found in the whole literary unit and not the details. Beware of proof-texting or using OT narratives as a precedent for your life.

IV. Two levels of interpretation:

- A. YHWH's redemptive, revelatory acts for Abraham's seed
- B. YHWH's will for every believer's life (in every age)
- C. The first focuses on “knowing God (salvation); the second on serving Him (the Christian life of faith, cf. Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:6,11).

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: OT PREDICTIONS OF THE FUTURE VS. NT PREDICTIONS

(This is taken from my commentary on Revelation, “Crucial Introductory Article”)

FIRST TENSION (OT racial, national, and geographical categories vs. all believers over all the world)

The OT prophets predict a restoration of a Jewish kingdom in Palestine centered in Jerusalem where all the nations of the earth gather to praise and serve a Davidic ruler, but Jesus nor the NT Apostles ever focus on this agenda. Is not the OT

inspired (cf. Matt. 5:17-19)? Have the NT authors omitted crucial end-time events?

There are several sources of information about the end of the world:

1. OT prophets (Isaiah, Micah, Malachi)
2. OT apocalyptic writers (cf. Ezekiel 37-39; Daniel 7-12; Zechariah)
3. intertestamental, non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writers (like I Enoch, which is alluded to in Jude)
4. Jesus Himself (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
5. the writings of Paul (cf. I Corinthians 15; II Corinthians 5; I Thessalonians 4-5; II Thessalonians 2)
6. the writings of John (I John and Revelation).

Do these all clearly teach an end-time agenda (events, chronology, persons)? If not, why? Are they not all inspired (except the Jewish intertestamental writings)?

The Spirit revealed truths to the OT writers in terms and categories they could understand. However, through progressive revelation the Spirit has expanded these OT eschatological concepts to a universal scope ("the mystery of Christ," cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13. See Special topic at 10:7). Here are some relevant examples:

1. The city of Jerusalem in the OT is used as a metaphor of the people of God (Zion), but is projected into the NT as a term expressing God's acceptance of all repentant, believing humans (the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22). The theological expansion of a literal, physical city into the new people of God (believing Jews and Gentiles) is foreshadowed in God's promise to redeem fallen mankind in Gen. 3:15 before there even were any Jews or a Jewish capital city. Even Abraham's call (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) involved the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5).
2. In the OT the enemies of God's people are the surrounding nations of the ancient Near East, but in the NT they have been expanded to all unbelieving, anti-God, Satanically-inspired people. The battle has moved from a geographical, regional conflict to a worldwide, cosmic conflict (cf. Colossians).
3. The promise of a land which is so integral in the OT (the Patriarchal promises of Genesis, cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:7-15; 17:8) has now become the whole earth. New Jerusalem comes down to a recreated earth, not the Near East only or exclusively (cf. Rev. 21-22).
4. Some other examples of OT prophetic concepts being expanded are (1) the seed of Abraham is now the spiritually circumcised (cf. Rom. 2:28-29); (2) the covenant people now include Gentiles (cf. Hos. 1:10; 2:23, quoted in Rom. 9:24-26; also Lev. 26:12; Exod. 29:45, quoted in II Cor. 6:16-18 and Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2, quoted in Titus 2:14); (3) the temple is now Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:61; 27:40; John 2:19-21) and through Him the local church (cf. I Cor. 3:16) or the individual believer (cf. I Cor. 6:19); and (4) even Israel and its characteristic descriptive OT phrases now refer to the whole people of God (i.e., "Israel," cf. Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16, i.e., "kingdom of priests," cf. I Pet. 2:5, 9-10; Rev. 1:6)

The prophetic model has been fulfilled, expanded, and is now more inclusive. Jesus and the apostolic writers do not present the end-time in the same way as the OT prophets (cf. Martin Wyngaarden, *The Future of The Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*). Modern interpreters who try to make the OT model literal or normative twist the Revelation into a very Jewish book and force meaning into atomized, ambiguous phrases of Jesus and Paul! The NT writers do not negate the OT prophets, but show their ultimate universal implication. There is no organized, logical system to Jesus' or Paul's eschatology. Their purpose is primarily redemptive or pastoral.

However, even within the NT there is tension. There is no clear systemization of eschatological events. In many ways the Revelation surprisingly uses OT allusions in describing the end instead of the teachings of Jesus (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13)! It follows the literary genre initiated by Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, but developed during the intertestamental period (Jewish apocalyptic literature). This may have been John's way of linking the Old and New Covenants. It shows the age-old pattern of human rebellion and God's commitment to redemption! But it must be noted that although Revelation uses OT language, persons, and events, it reinterprets them in light of first century Rome (cf. Rev. 1:7).

SECOND TENSION (monotheism vs. an elect people)

The biblical emphasis is on one personal, spiritual, creator-redeemer, God (cf. Exod. 8:10; Isa. 44:24; 45:5-7,14,18,21-22; 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7). The OT's uniqueness in its own day was its monotheism. All of the surrounding nations were polytheists. The oneness of God is the heart of OT revelation (cf. Deut. 6:4). Creation is a stage for the purpose of fellowship between God and mankind, made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). However, mankind rebelled, sinning against God's love, leadership, and purpose (cf. Genesis 3). God's love and purpose were so strong and sure that He promised to redeem fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15)!

The tension arises when God chooses to use one man, one family, one nation to reach the rest of mankind. God's election of Abraham and the Jews as a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:4-6) caused pride instead of service, exclusion instead of inclusion. God's call of Abraham involved the intentional blessing of all mankind (cf. Gen. 12:3). It must be remembered and emphasized that OT election was for service, not salvation. All Israel was never right with God, never eternally saved based solely on her birthright (cf. John 8:31-59; Matt. 3:9), but by personal faith and obedience (cf. Gen. 15:6, quoted in Romans 4). Israel lost her mission (the church is now a kingdom of priests, cf. Rev. 1:6; II Pet. 2:59), turned mandate into privilege, service into a special standing! God chose one to choose all!

THIRD TENSION (conditional covenants vs. unconditional covenants)

There is a theological tension or paradox between conditional and unconditional covenants. It is surely true that God's redemptive purpose/plan is unconditional (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). However, the mandated human response is always conditional!

The "if. . .then" pattern appears in both OT and NT. God is faithful; mankind is unfaithful. This tension has caused much confusion. Interpreters have tended to focus on only one "horn of the dilemma," God's faithfulness or human effort, God's sovereignty or mankind's free will. Both are biblical and necessary.

This relates to eschatology, to God's OT promises to Israel. If God promises it, that settles it, yes? God is bound to His promises; His reputation is involved (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). The unconditional and conditional covenants meet in Christ (cf. Isa. 53), not Israel! God's ultimate faithfulness lies in the redemption of all who will repent and believe, not in who was your father/mother! Christ, not Israel, is the key to all of God's covenants and promises. If there is a theological parenthesis in the Bible, it is not the Church, but Israel (cf. Acts 7 and Galatians 3).

The world mission of gospel proclamation has passed to the Church (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). It is still a conditional covenant! This is not to imply that God has totally rejected the Jews (cf. Romans 9-11). There may be a place and purpose for end-time, believing Israel (cf. Zech. 12:10).

FOURTH TENSION (Near Eastern literary models vs. western models).

Genre is a critical element in correctly interpreting the Bible. The Church developed in a western (Greek) cultural setting. Eastern literature is much more figurative, metaphorical, and symbolic than modern, western culture's literary models. It focuses on people, encounters, and events more than societal propositional truths. Christians have been guilty of using their history and literary models to interpret biblical prophecy (both OT and NT). Each generation and geographical entity has used its culture, history, and literalness to interpret Revelation. Every one of them has been wrong! It is arrogant to think that modern western culture is the focus of biblical prophecy!

The genre in which the original, inspired author chooses to write is a literary contract with the reader. The book of Revelation is not historical narrative. It is a combination of letter (chapters 1-3), prophecy, and mostly apocalyptic literature. It is as wrong to make the Bible say more than was intended by the original author as it is to make it say less than what he intended! Interpreters' arrogance and dogmatism are even more inappropriate in a book like Revelation.

The Church has never agreed on a proper interpretation. My concern is to hear and deal with the whole Bible, not some selected part(s). The Bible's eastern mind-set presents truth in tension-filled pairs. Our western trend toward propositional truth is not invalid, but unbalanced! I think it is possible to remove at least some of the impasse in interpreting Revelation by noting its changing purpose to successive generations of believers. It is obvious to most

interpreters that Revelation must be interpreted in light of its own day and its genre. An historical approach to Revelation must deal with what the first readers would have, and could have, understood. In many ways modern interpreters have lost the meaning of many of the symbols of the book. Revelation's initial main thrust was to encourage persecuted believers. It showed God's control of history (as did the OT prophets); it affirmed that history is moving toward an appointed terminus, judgment or blessing (as did the OT prophets). It affirmed in first century Jewish apocalyptic terms God's love, presence, power, and sovereignty!

It functions in these same theological ways to every generation of believers. It depicts the cosmic struggle of good and evil. The first century details may have been lost to us, but not the powerful, comforting truths. When modern, western interpreters try to force the details of Revelation into their contemporary history, the pattern of false interpretations continues!

It is quite possible that the details of the book may become strikingly literal again (as did the OT in relation to the birth, life, and death of Christ) for the last generation of believers as they face the onslaught of an anti-God leader (cf. II Thessalonians 2) and culture. No one can know these literal fulfillments of the Revelation until the words of Jesus (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13; and Luke 21) and Paul (cf. I Corinthians 15; I Thessalonians 4-5; and II Thessalonians 2) also become historically evident. Guessing, speculation, and dogmatism are all inappropriate. Apocalyptic literature allows this flexibility. Thank God for images and symbols that surpass historical narrative! God is in control; He reigns; He comes!

Most modern commentaries miss the point of the genre! Modern western interpreters often seek a clear, logical system of theology rather than being fair with an ambiguous, symbolic, dramatic genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature. This truth is expressed well by Ralph P. Martin in his article, "Approaches to New Testament Exegesis," in the book *New Testament Interpretation*, edited by I. Howard Marshall:

"Unless we recognize the dramatic quality of this writing and recall the way in which language is being used as a vehicle to express religious truth, we shall grievously err in our understanding of the Apocalypse, and mistakenly try to interpret its visions as though it were a book of literal prose and concerned to describe events of empirical and datable history. To attempt the latter course is to run into all manner of problems of interpretation. More seriously it leads to a distortion of the essential meaning of apocalyptic and so misses the great value of this part of the New Testament as a dramatic assertion in mythopoetic language of the sovereignty of God in Christ and the paradox of his rule which blends might and love (cf. 5:5,6; the Lion is the Lamb)" (p. 235).

W. Randolph Tate in his book *Biblical Interpretations* said:

"No other genre of the Bible has been so fervently read with such depressing results as apocalypse, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. This genre had suffered from a disastrous history of misinterpretation due to a fundamental misunderstanding of its literary forms, structure, and purpose. Because of its very claim to reveal what is shortly to happen, apocalypse has been viewed as a road map into and a blueprint of the future. The tragic flaw in this view is the assumption that the books' frame of reference is the reader's contemporary age rather than the author's. This misguided approach to apocalypse (particularly Revelation) treats the work as if it were a cryptogram by which contemporary events can be used to interpret the symbol of the text. . . First, the interpreter must recognize that apocalyptic communicates its messages through symbolism. To interpret a symbol literally when it is metaphoric is simply to misinterpret. The issue is not whether the events in apocalyptic are historical. The events may be historical; they may have really happened, or might happen, but the author presents events and communicates meaning through images and archetypes" (p. 137).

From *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, edited by Ryken, Wilhost and Longman III:

"Today's readers are often puzzled and frustrated by this genre. The unexpected imagery and out-of-this-world experiences seem bizarre and out of sync with most of Scripture. Taking this literature at face value leaves many readers scrambling to determine 'what will happen when,' thus missing the intent of the apocalyptic message" (p. 35).

SPECIAL TOPIC: OT PROPHECY

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Opening Statements

1. The believing community does not agree on how to interpret prophecy. Other truths have been established as to an orthodox position throughout the centuries, but not this one.
2. There are several well defined stages of OT prophecy:

a. premonarchial:

(1) individuals called prophets

- (a) Abraham - Gen. 20:7
- (b) Moses - Num. 12:6-8; Deut. 18:15; 34:10
- (c) Aaron - Exod. 7:1 (spokesman for Moses)
- (d) Miriam - Exod. 15:20
- (e) Medad and Eldad - Num. 11:24-30
- (f) Deborah - Jdgs. 4:4
- (g) unnamed - Jdgs. 6:7-10
- (h) Samuel - I Sam. 3:20

(2) references to prophets as a group - Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22

(3) prophetic group or guild - I Sam. 10:5-13; 19:20; I Kgs. 20:35,41; 22:6,10-13; II Kgs. 2:3,7; 4:1,38; 5:22; 6:1, etc.

(4) Messiah called prophet - Deut. 18:15-18

b. non-writing monarchial (they address the king):

- (1) Gad - I Sam. 22:5; II Sam. 24:11; I Chr. 29:29
- (2) Nathan - II Sam. 7:2; 12:25; I Kgs. 1:22
- (3) Ahijah - I Kgs. 11:29
- (4) Jehu - I Kgs. 16:1,7,12
- (5) unnamed - I Kgs. 18:4,13; 20:13,22
- (6) Elijah - I Kgs. 18-II Kgs. 2
- (7) Milcaiah - I Kgs. 22
- (8) Elisha - II Kgs. 2:8,13

c. classical writing prophets (they address the nation as well as the king): Isaiah-Malachi (except Daniel)

B. Biblical Terms

1. *Ro'eh* = "seer," I Sam. 9:9. This reference itself shows the transition to the term *Nabi*. *Ro'eh* is from the general term "to see." This person understood God's ways and plans and was consulted to ascertain God's will in a matter.

2. *Hozeh* = “seer,” II Sam. 24:11. It is basically a synonym of *Ro’eh*. It is from a rarer term “to see.” The participled form is used most often to refer to prophets (i.e., “to behold”).
3. *Nabi’* = “prophet,” cognate of Akkadian VERB *Nabu* = “to call” and Arabic *Naba’a* = “to announce.” This is the most common term in the Old Testament to designate a prophet. It is used over 300 times. The exact etymology is uncertain but “to call” at present seems the best option. Possibly the best understanding comes from YHWH’s description of Moses’ relationship to Pharaoh through Aaron (cf. Exod. 4:10-16; 7:1; Deut. 5:5. A prophet is someone who speaks for God to His people (Amos 3:8; Jer. 1:7,17; Ezek. 3:4.)
4. All three terms are used of the prophet’s office in I Chr. 29:29; Samuel - *Ro’eh*; Nathan - *Nabi’* and Gad - *Hozeh*.
5. The phrase, *’ish ha - ’elohim*, “Man of God,” is also a broader designation for a speaker for God. It is used some 76 times in the OT in the sense of “prophet.”
6. The term “prophet” is Greek in origin. It comes from: (1) *pro* = “before” or “for” and
(2) *phemi* = “to speak.”

II. DEFINITION OF PROPHECY

- A. The term “prophecy” had a wider semantic field in Hebrew than in English. The history books of Joshua through Kings (except Ruth) are labeled by the Jews as “the former prophets.” Both Abraham (Gen. 20:7; Ps. 105:5) and Moses (Deut. 18:18) are designated as prophets (also Miriam, Exod. 15:20). Therefore, beware of an assumed English definition!
- B. “Propheticism may legitimately be defined as that understanding of history which accepts meaning only in terms of divine concern, divine purpose, divine participation,” *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3, p. 896.
- C. “The prophet is neither a philosopher nor a systematic theologian, but a covenant mediator who delivers the word of God to His people in order to shape their future by reforming their present, “Prophets and Prophecy,” *Encyclopedia Judaica* vol. 13 p. 1152.

III. PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

- A. Prophecy is a way for God to speak to His people, providing guidance in their current setting and hope in His control of their lives and world events. Their message was basically corporate. It is meant to rebuke, encourage, engender faith and repentance, and inform God’s people about Himself and His plans. They hold God’s people to fidelity to God’s covenants. To this must be added that often it is used to clearly reveal God’s choice of a spokesman (Deut. 13:1-3; 18:20-22). This, taken ultimately, would refer to the Messiah.
- B. Often, the prophet took a historical or theological crisis of his day and projected this into an eschatological setting. This end time view of history is unique in Israel and its sense of divine election and covenant promises.
- C. The office of prophet seems to balance (Jer. 18:18) and usurp the office of High Priest as a way to know God’s will. The Urim and Thummim transcend into a verbal message from God’s spokesman. The office of prophet seems to also have passed away in Israel after Malachi. It does not reappear until 400 years later with John the Baptist. It is uncertain how the New Testament gift of “prophecy” relates to the Old Testament. New

Testament prophets (Acts 11:27-28; 13:1; 14:29,32,37; 15:32; I Cor. 12:10,28-29; Eph. 4:11) are not revealers of new revelation or Scripture, but forth-tellers and foretellers of God's will in covenant situations.

- D. Prophecy is not exclusively or primarily predictive in nature. Prediction is one way to confirm his office and his message, but it must be noted "less than 2% of OT prophecy is Messianic. Less than 5% specifically describes the New Covenant Age. Less than 1% concerns events yet to come." (Fee & Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 166)
- E. Prophets represent God to the people, while Priests represent the people to God. This is a general statement. There are exceptions like Habakkuk, who addresses questions to God.
- F. One reason it is difficult to understand the prophets is because we do not know how their books were structured. They are not chronological. They seem to be thematic but not always the way one would expect. Often there is no obvious historical setting, time frame or clear division between oracles. These books are difficult: (1) to read through in one sitting; (2) to outline by topic; and (3) to ascertain the central truth or authorial intent in each oracle.

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPHECY

- A. In the Old Testament there seems to be a development of the concept of "prophet" and "prophecy." In early Israel there developed a fellowship of prophets, led by a strong charismatic leader such as Elijah or Elisha. Sometimes the phrase, "the sons of the prophets," was used to designate this group (II Kings 2). The prophets were characterized by forms of ecstasy (I Sam. 10:10-13; 19:18-24).
- B. However, this period passed rapidly into individual prophets. There were those prophets (both true and false) who identified with the King, and lived at the palace (Gad, Nathan). Also, there were those who were independent, sometimes totally unconnected with the status quo of Israeli society (Amos). They are both male and female (II Kgs. 22:14.)
- C. The prophet was often a revealer of the future, conditioned on man's immediate response. Often the prophet's task was an unfolding of God's universal plan for His creation which is not affected by human response. This universal eschatological plan is unique among the prophets of the ancient Near East. Prediction and Covenant fidelity are twin foci of the prophetic messages (cf. Fee and Stuart, p. 150). This implies that the prophets are primarily corporate in focus. They usually, but not exclusively, address the nation.
- D. Most prophetic material was orally presented. It was later combined by means of theme, chronology or other patterns of Near Eastern Literature which are lost to us. Because it was oral it is not as structured as written prose. This makes the books difficult to read straight through and difficult to understand without a specific historical setting.
- E. The prophets use several patterns to convey their messages:
 - 1. Court Scene - God takes His people to court, often it is a divorce case where YHWH rejects his wife (Israel) for her unfaithfulness (Hosea 4; Micah 6).
 - 2. Funeral dirge - the special meter of this type of message and its characteristic "woe" sets it apart as a special form (Isaiah 5; Habakkuk 2).
 - 3. Covenant Blessing Pronouncement - the conditional nature of the Covenant is emphasized and the consequences, both positively and negatively, are spelled out for the future (Deut. 27-28).

V. HELPFUL GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

- A. Find the intent of the original prophet (editor) by noting the historical setting and the literary context of each oracle. Usually it will involve Israel breaking the Mosaic Covenant in some way.
- B. Read and interpret the whole oracle, not just a part; outline it as to content. See how it relates to surrounding oracles. Try to outline the whole book.
- C. Assume a literal interpretation of the passage until something in the text itself points you to figurative usage; then put the figurative language into prose.
- D. Analyze symbolic action in light of historical setting and parallel passages. Be sure to remember this Ancient Near Eastern literature is not western or modern literature.
- E. Treat prediction with care:
 - 1. Are they exclusively for the author's day?
 - 2. Were they subsequently fulfilled in Israel's history?
 - 3. Are they yet future events?
 - 4. Do they have a contemporary fulfillment and yet a future fulfillment?
 - 5. Allow the authors of the Bible, not modern authors, to guide your answers.

F. Special concerns

- 1. Is the prediction qualified by conditional response?
- 2. Is it certain to whom the prophecy is addressed (and why)?
- 3. Is there a possibility both Biblically and/or historically for multiple fulfillment?
- 4. The NT authors under inspiration were able to see the Messiah in many places in the OT that are not obvious to us. They seem to use typology or word play. Since we are not inspired we best leave this approach to them.

VI. HELPFUL BOOKS

- A. *A Guide to Biblical Prophecy* by Carl E. Amending and W. Ward Basque
- B. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- C. *My Servants the Prophets* by Edward J. Young
- D. *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* by D. Brent Sandy
- E. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 4, pp. 1067-1078

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: OT TITLES OF THE SPECIAL COMING ONE

I. Prophet - Deut. 18:15,18

II. King

- A. from the tribe of Judah, Gen. 49:10; Ps. 60:7; 108:8
- B. from the family of David, II Sam. 7 (from Jesse, Isa. 11:1)
- C. from other texts, I Sam. 2:10; Ps. 89:3-4; Isa. 9,11; Jer. 30:8-9; Ezek. 37:21-22; Zech. 9:9-10

III. King/Priest

- A. Psalm 110 (king, vv. 1-3; priest, v. 4)
- B. Zech. 4:14 (the two olive trees, the two anointed ones, Zerubbabel [line of David] and Joshua [line of Aaron])

IV. Anointed One (Messiah)

- A. God's King, Ps. 2:2; 45:7
- B. Spirit's presence, Isa. 11:2; 61:1
- C. Coming One, Dan. 9:26
- D. three OT leaders were anointed as a sign of God's call and empowering: kings (cf. Jdgs. 9:8,15; I Sam. 2:10; 9:16; 24:10; II Sam. 19:21; 23:1; Ps. 18:50), priests (cf. Exod. 28:41; Lev. 4:3; 6:22) and prophets (cf. I Kgs. 19:16)

V. King's Son

- A. Ps. 2:7,12
- B. Israel's king as a symbol of God's reign (cf. I Samuel 8)

VI. Son of Man (Dan. 7:13)

- A. human, Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1
- B. divine, Dan. 7:13

VII. Special Redemptive Titles

- A. Suffering Servant, Isa. 52:13-53:12
- B. Suffering Shepherd, Zech. 12-14
- C. Cornerstone, Ps. 118; Isa. 8:14-15; 28:16
- D. Special Child, Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; Micah 5:2
- E. Branch, Isa. 4:2; 11:5; 53:2; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12

The NT takes these scattered references about God's special redemptive agent and clarifies and develops them into an understanding of Jesus as God's Promised Coming One (e.g., Matt. 16:13-20; John 11:25-27). The two comings of the Messiah are the means by which these diverse functions and titles are united.

For a good discussion of the distinction in the Gospels between Son of Man as authority figure versus Suffering Servant, see George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 149-158.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PASSOVER

I. Opening Statements

- A. This divine act of judgment of Egyptians and deliverance for Israel is the touchstone for YHWH's love and establishment of Israel as a nation (i.e., esp. for the Prophets)
- B. The exodus is a specific fulfillment of YHWH's promise to Abraham in Gen. 15:12-21. The Passover commemorates the exodus.
- C. This is the last and most pervasive (geographically, i.e., Egypt and Goshen) and devastating (first born of humans and cattle killed) of the ten plagues sent by YHWH on Egypt through Moses.

II. The Term Itself (BDB 820, KB 947)

A. Meaning of NOUN is uncertain

1. connected to "plague," thereby "to strike a blow" (i.e., Exod. 11:1); YHWH's angel strikes the firstborn of humans and cattle

B. Meaning of VERB:

1. “to limp” or “to hobble” (cf. II Sam. 4:4), used in sense of “jump over the marked homes” (i.e., Exod. 12:13,23,27, BDB 619, a popular etymology)
2. “to dance” (cf. I Kgs. 18:21)
3. Akkadian - “to appease”
4. Egyptian - “to strike” (see A. 1.)
5. parallel VERBS in Isa. 31:5, “to stand guard over” (cf. REB of Exod. 12:13)
6. early Christian popular sound play between Hebrew *pasah* to Greek *paschō*, “to suffer”

C. Possible historical precedents:

1. shepherd sacrifice for a new year
2. Bedouin sacrifice and communal meal at the time of moving tents to spring pasture to ward off evil
3. sacrifice to ward off evil from nomadic people

D. The reasons it is so hard to not only be sure of the meaning of the word itself, but also its origins is that so many varied features of the Passover are also found in other ancient rituals:

1. spring date
2. etymology of NOUN uncertain
3. connected to night watchings
4. use of blood
5. imagery of angels/demons
6. special meal
7. agricultural elements (unleavened bread)
8. no priests, no altar, local focus

III. The Event

A. The event itself is recorded in Exodus 11-12.

B. The annual feast is described in Exodus 12 and is combined into an eight day festival with the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

1. originally it was a local event, cf. Exod. 12:21-23; Deut. 16:5 (cf. Numbers 9)
 - a. no priest
 - b. no special altar
 - c. specialized uses of blood
2. it became an event at the central shrine
3. this combination of a local sacrifice (i.e., lamb’s blood to commemorate the passing over of the death angel) and a harvest feast at the central sanctuary was accomplished by the close proximity of dates *Abib* or *Nisan* 14 and 15-21

C. The symbolic ownership of all of the firstborn of humans and cattle and their redemption is described in Exodus 13.

IV. Historical Accounts of Its Observance

- A. The first Passover celebrated in Egypt, Exodus 12
- B. At Mt. Horeb/Sinai, Numbers 9
- C. The first Passover celebrated in Canaan (Gilgal), Josh. 5:10-12
- D. At the time of Solomon's dedication of the temple, I Kgs. 9:25 and I Chr. 8:12 (probably, but not specifically stated)
- E. the one during Hezekiah's reign, II Chronicles 30
- F. the one during Josiah's reforms, II Kgs. 23:21-23; II Chr. 35:1-18
- G. Notice II Kgs. 23:22 and II Chr. 35:18 mention Israel's neglect in keeping this annual feast

V. The Significance

- A. This is one of three required annual feast days (cf. Exod. 23:14-17; 34:22-24; Deut. 16:16):
 - 1. Passover/Unleavened Bread
 - 2. Feast of Weeks
 - 3. Feast of Booths
- B. Moses foreshadows the day it will be observed at the central sanctuary (as were the other two feasts) in Deuteronomy.
- C. Jesus used the occasion of the annual Passover meal (or the day before) to reveal the New Covenant in the symbol of bread and wine, but did not use the lamb:
 - 1. communal meal
 - 2. redemptive sacrifice
 - 3. ongoing significance to later generations

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: PEACE AND WAR

I. Introduction

- A. The Bible, our sole source for faith and practice, has no definitive passage on peace. In fact, it is paradoxical in its presentation. The OT may be alluded to as an approach to peace which is militaristic. The NT, however, puts the conflict into spiritual terms of light and darkness.
- B. Biblical faith, as well as world religions of the past and present, sought and still expect, a golden age of prosperity which is absent from conflict.
 - 1. Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:6-9; 32:15-18; 51:3; Hosea 2:18; Micah 4:3
 - 2. Biblical faith prophesies the personal agency of the Messiah, Isa. 9:6-7
- C. However, how do we live in a world of conflict? There have been three basic Christian responses which have developed chronologically between the death of the Apostles and the Middle Ages.
 - 1. Pacifism, although rare in antiquity, it was the early church's response to the Roman military society.
 - 2. Just war, after the conversion of Constantine (313 A.D.) the church began to rationalize the military support of a "Christian state" in response to successive Barbarian invasions. This was basically the classical Greek position. This position was first articulated by Ambrose and expanded and developed by Augustine.

3. Crusade, this is similar to the Holy War concept of the OT. It developed in the Middle Ages in response to the Muslim advances in the “Holy Land” and ancient Christian territories such as North Africa, Asia Minor, and the Eastern Roman Empire. It was not on behalf of the state, but on behalf of the Church and under its auspices.
4. All three of these views developed in a Christian context with differing views on how Christians should relate to a fallen world system. Each emphasized certain Bible texts to the exclusion of others. Pacifism tended to separate itself from the world. The “Just War” response has advocated the power of the state to control an evil world (Martin Luther). The Crusade position has advocated that the Church attack the fallen world system so as to control it.
5. Roland H. Bainton, in his book, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace*, published by Abingdon, page 15, says
 “The Reformation precipitated wars of religion, in which the three historic positions reappeared: the just war among the Lutherans and the Anglicans, the crusade in the Reformed Churches, and pacifism among the Anabaptists and later the Quakers. The eighteenth century in theory and in practice resuscitated the humanist peace ideals of the Renaissance. The nineteenth century was an age of comparative peace and great agitation for the elimination of war. The twentieth century has seen two world wars. In this period again, the three historic positions have recurred. The churches in the United States particularly took a crusading attitude toward the First World War; pacifism was prevalent between the two wars; the mood of the Second World War approximated that of the just war.”

D. The exact definition of “peace” has been disputed.

1. For the Greeks it seems to refer to a society of order and coherence.
2. For the Romans it was the absence of conflict brought about through the power of the state.
3. For the Hebrews peace was a gift of YHWH based on mankind’s proper response to Him. It was usually put in agricultural terms (cf. Deut. 27-28). Not only prosperity, but divine security and protection are included.

II. Biblical Material

A. Old Testament

1. Holy War is a basic concept of the OT. The phrase “kill not” of Exod. 20:13 and Deut. 5:17 in Hebrew refers to premeditated murder (BDB 953), not death by accident or passion or war. YHWH is even seen as a warrior on behalf of His people (cf. Joshua - Judges and Isa. 59:17, alluded to in Eph. 6:14).
2. God even uses war as a means of punishing His wayward people - Assyria exiles Israel (722 A.D.); Neo-Babylon exiles Judah (586 B.C.).
3. It is shocking, in such a militaristic atmosphere, to read of the “suffering servant” of Isaiah 53 which can be classified as redemptive pacifism.

B. New Testament

1. In the Gospels soldiers are mentioned without condemnation. The Roman

- “centurion” are mentioned often and almost always in a noble sense.
2. Even believing soldiers are not commanded to give up their vocation (early church).
 3. The New Testament does not advocate a detailed answer to social evils in terms of political theory or action, but in spiritual redemption. The focus is not on physical battles, but on the spiritual battle between light and dark, goodness and evil, love and hate, God and Satan (Eph. 6:10-17).
 4. Peace is an attitude of the heart amidst the problems of the world. It is related solely to our relationship with Christ (Rom. 5:1; John 14:27), not the state. The peacemakers of Matt. 5:9 are not political, but proclaimers of the gospel! Fellowship, not strife, should characterize the Church life, both to itself and to a lost world.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL

This is a very difficult subject for several reasons:

1. The OT does not reveal an arch enemy to good, but a servant of YHWH who offers mankind an alternative and accuses mankind of unrighteousness.
2. The concept of a personal arch enemy of God developed in the inter-biblical (non-canonical) literature under the influence of Persian religion (*Zoroastrianism*). This, in turn, greatly influenced rabbinical Judaism.
3. The NT develops the OT themes in surprisingly stark, but selective, categories.

If one approaches the study of evil from the perspective of biblical theology (each book or author or genre studied and outlined separately) then very different views of evil are revealed.

If, however, one approaches the study of evil from a non-biblical or extra-biblical approach of world religions or eastern religions then much of the NT development is foreshadowed in Persian dualism and Greco-Roman spiritism.

If one is presuppositionally committed to the divine authority of Scripture, then the NT development must be seen as progressive revelation. Christians must guard against allowing Jewish folk lore or English literature (i.e., Dante, Milton) to further clarify the concept. There is certainly mystery and ambiguity in this area of revelation. God has chosen not to reveal all aspects of evil, its origin, its purpose, but He has revealed its defeat!

In the OT the term Satan (BDB 966) or accuser seems to relate to three separate groups:

1. human accusers (I Sam. 29:4; II Sam. 19:22; I Kgs. 11:14,23,25; Ps. 109:6)
2. angelic accusers (Num. 22:22-23; Zech. 3:1)
3. demonic accusers (I Chr. 21:1; I Kgs. 22:21; Zech. 13:2)

Only later in the intertestamental period is the serpent of Gen. 3 identified with Satan (cf. Book of Wisdom 2:23-24; II Enoch 31:3), and even later does this become a rabbinical option (cf. *Sot* 9b and *Sanh.* 29a). The “sons of God” of Gen. 6 become angels in I Enoch 54:6. I mention this, not to assert its theological accuracy, but to show its development. In the NT these OT activities are attributed to angelic, personified evil (i.e., Satan) in II Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9.

The origin of personified evil is difficult or impossible (depending on your point of view) to determine from the OT. One reason for this is Israel’s strong monotheism (cf. I Kgs. 22:20-22; Eccl. 7:14; Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6). All causality was attributed to YHWH to demonstrate His uniqueness and primacy (cf. Isa. 43:11; 44:6,8,24; 45:5-6,14,18,21,22).

Sources of possible information are focusing on (1) Job 1-2 where Satan is one of the “sons of God” (i.e., angels) or (2)

Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28 where prideful near eastern kings (Babylon and Tyre) are used to illustrate the pride of Satan (cf. I Tim. 3:6). I have mixed emotions about this approach. Ezekiel uses Garden of Eden metaphors not only of the king of Tyre as Satan (cf. Ezek. 28:12-16), but also for the king of Egypt as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Ezekiel 31). However, Isa. 14, particularly vv. 12-14, seems to describe an angelic revolt through pride. If God wanted to reveal to us the specific nature and origin of Satan this is a very oblique way and place to do it. We must guard against the trend of systematic theology of taking small, ambiguous parts of different testaments, authors, books, and genres and combining them as pieces of one divine puzzle.

Alfred Edersheim (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendices XIII [pp. 748-763] and XVI [pp. 770-776]) says that Rabbinical Judaism has been overly influenced by Persian dualism and demonic speculation. The rabbis are not a good source for truth in this area. Jesus radically diverges from the teachings of the Synagogue. I think that the rabbinical concept of angelic mediation and opposition in the giving of the law to Moses on Mt. Sinai opened the door to the concept of an arch-angelic enemy of YHWH as well as mankind. There are two high gods of Iranian (Zoroastrian) dualism, *Ahkiman* and *Ormaza*, good and evil. This dualism developed into a Judaic limited dualism of YHWH and Satan.

There is surely progressive revelation in the NT as to the development of evil, but not as elaborate as the rabbis proclaim. A good example of this difference is the “war in heaven.” The fall of Satan is a logical necessity, but the specifics are not given. Even what is given is veiled in apocalyptic genre (cf. Rev. 12:4,7,12-13). Although Satan is defeated and exiled to earth, he still functions as a servant of YHWH (cf. Matt. 4:1; Luke 22:31-32; I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20).

We must curb our curiosity in this area. There is a personal force of temptation and evil, but there is still only one God and mankind is still responsible for his/her choices. There is a spiritual battle, both before and after salvation. Victory can only come and remain in and through the Triune God. Evil has been defeated and will be removed!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: POSSESS THE LAND

This VERB (BDB 439, KB 441, *Qal* PERFECT) is used repeatedly in connection with:

1. YHWH's promise/oath to the Patriarchs (cf. 1:8; 10:11)
2. Israel acting on these promises and invading the land (cf. 2:24; 3:18-20)
3. It parallels “inheritance” (3:28)
4. Israel must obey the covenant so as to maintain possession of the land (cf. 4:1,5,14; 6:1; 8:1; 11:8-9,26-32)

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: PREDESTINATION (CALVINISM) vs. HUMAN FREE WILL (ARMINIANISM)

This passage is a balance to other NT passages on election. I thought it might be theologically helpful to provide my commentary notes from Rom. 8:29 and 9, as well as Ephesians 1.

- I. Romans 8:29 - Paul uses “foreknew” (*proginōskō*, “to know before”) twice, here and 11:2. In 11:2 it refers to God's covenant love for Israel before time began. Remember that the term “know” in Hebrew related to intimate, personal relationship, not to facts about someone (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5). Here it was included in a chain of eternal events (cf. Rom. 8:29-30). This term was linked with predestination. However, it must be stated that God's foreknowledge is not the basis of election because if that were so, then election would be based on fallen humanity's future response, which would be human performance. This term is also found in Acts 26:5; I Pet. 1:2,20 and II Pet. 3:17.

A. “foreknew” (*proginōskō*, “to know before”)

The terms “foreknow” or “predestine” are both compounds with the preposition “before” and therefore, should be translated “to know before,” “to set bounds before,” or “mark off before.” The definitive passages on predestination in the NT are Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:13-14; and Romans 9. These texts obviously stress that God is sovereign. He is in total control of all things. There is a preset divine plan being worked out in time. However, this plan is not arbitrary or selective. It is based not only on God’s sovereignty and foreknowledge, but on His unchanging character of love, mercy, and undeserved grace.

We must be careful of our western (American) individualism or our evangelical zeal coloring this wonderful truth. We must also guard against being polarized into the historical, theological conflicts between Augustine versus Pelagius or Calvinism versus Arminianism.

B. “predestined” (*proorizō*, “to set the bounds before”)

Predestination is not a doctrine meant to limit God’s love, grace, and mercy nor to exclude some from the gospel. It is meant to strengthen believers by molding their world-view. God is for all mankind (cf. I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9). God is in control of all things. Who or what can separate

us from Him (cf. Rom. 8:31-39)? God views all history as present. Humans are time bound. Our perspective and mental abilities are limited. There is no contradiction between God’s sovereignty and mankind’s free will. It is a covenantal structure. This is another example of truth given in dialectical tension. Biblical doctrines are presented from different perspectives. They often appear paradoxical. The truth is a balance between the seemingly opposite pairs. We must not remove the tension by picking one of the truths. We must not isolate any biblical truth into a compartment by itself.

It is also important to add that the goal of election is not only heaven when we die, but Christlikeness now (cf. Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4; 2:10). We were chosen to be “holy and blameless.” God chooses to change us so that others may see the change and respond by faith to God in Christ. Predestination is not a personal privilege, but a covenantal responsibility. This is the major truth of the passage. This is the goal of Christianity. Holiness is God’s will for every believer. God’s election is to Christlikeness (cf. Eph. 1:4), not a special standing. The image of God, which was given to man in creation (cf. Gen. 1:26; 5:1,3; 9:6), is to be restored.

C. “conformed to the image of His Son”—God’s ultimate goal is the restoration of the image lost in the Fall. Believers are foreordained to Christlikeness (cf. Eph. 1:4).

II. Romans 9

A. Chapter 9 is one of the strongest NT passages on God’s sovereignty (the other being, Eph. 1:3-14), while Romans 10 states humans’ free will clearly and repeatedly (cf. “everyone” v. 4; “whosoever” vv. 11,13; “all” v. 12 [twice]). Paul never tries to reconcile this theological tension. They are both true! Most Bible doctrines are presented in paradoxical or dialectical pairs. Most systems of theology are logical half-truths. Augustinianism and Calvinism versus semi-Pelagianism and Arminianism have elements of truth and error. Biblical tension between doctrines is preferable to a proof-texted, dogmatic, rational, theological system that forces the Bible onto a preconceived interpretive grid.

B. This same truth (found in Rom. 9:23) is stated in Rom. 8:29-30 and Eph. 1:4,11. This chapter is the strongest expression of God’s sovereignty in the NT. There can be no dispute that God is in total charge of creation and redemption. This great truth should never be softened or diminished. However, it must be balanced with God’s choice of covenant as a means of relating to human creation, made in His image. It is surely true that some OT covenants, like Genesis 15, are unconditional and do not relate at all to human response, but other covenants are conditioned on human response (e.g., Eden, Noah,

Moses, David). God has a plan of redemption for His creation; no human can affect this plan. God has chosen to allow individuals to participate in His plans. This opportunity for participation is a theological tension between sovereignty (Romans 9) and human free will (Romans 10).

It is not appropriate to select one biblical emphasis and ignore another. There is tension between doctrines because eastern people present truth in dialectical or tension-filled pairs. Doctrines must be held in relationship to other doctrines. Truth is a mosaic of truths.

III. Ephesians 1

A. Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool or means of others' redemption! In the OT the term was used primarily for service; in the NT it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming

contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God's sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind's necessary response (cf. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in 1:4. Jesus is God's elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind's need (Karl Barth). Ephesians 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven only, but holiness (Christlikeness). We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God's call (election) is for time as well as eternity!

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths (God as transcendent versus God as immanent; security vs. perseverance; Jesus as equal with the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father; Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility to a covenant partner, etc).

The theological concept of "covenant" unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant, faith response from man. Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology.

B. "He chose us" in Eph. 1:4 is an aorist middle indicative, which emphasizes the subject. This focuses on the Father's choice before time. God's choice must not be understood in the Islamic sense of determinism, nor in the ultra-Calvinistic sense as some versus others, but in the covenantal sense. God promised to redeem fallen mankind (cf. Gen. 3:15). God called and chose Abraham to choose all humans (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6). God Himself elected all persons who would exercise faith in Christ. God always takes the initiative in salvation (cf. John 6:44,65). This text and Romans 9 are the biblical basis for the doctrine of predestination emphasized by Augustine and Calvin.

God chose believers not only to salvation (justification), but also to sanctification (cf. Col. 1:12). This could relate to (1) our position in Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:21) or (2) God's desire to reproduce His character in His children (cf. 2:10; Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19). God's will for His children is both heaven one day and Christlikeness now!

"In Him" is a key concept of Eph. 1:4. The Father's blessings, grace, and salvation flow through Christ (cf. John 14:6). Notice the repetition of this grammatical form (LOCATIVE of sphere) in v. 3, "in Christ"; v. 4, "in Him"; v. 7, "in Him"; v. 9, "in Him"; v. 10, "in Christ," "in Him"; v. 12, "in Christ"; and v. 13, "in Him" (twice). Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind (Karl Barth). Jesus is the elect man and all

are potentially elect in Him. All of God the Father's blessings flow through Christ. The phrase "before the foundation of the world" is also used in Matt. 25:34; John 17:24; I Pet. 1:19-20 and Rev. 13:8. It shows the Triune God's redemptive activity even before Gen. 1:1. Humans are limited by their sense of time; everything to us is past, present and future, but not to God.

The goal of predestination is holiness, not privilege. God's call is not to a selected few of Adam's children, but to all! It is a call to be what God intended mankind to be, like Himself (cf.

I Thess. 5:23; II Thess. 2:13); in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). To turn predestination into a theological tenet instead of a holy life is a tragedy. Often our theologies speak louder than the biblical text.

The term "blameless" (amōmos) or "free from blemish" is used of (1) Jesus (cf. Heb. 9:14; I Pet. 1:19); (2) Zachariah and Elizabeth (cf. Luke 1:6); (3) Paul (cf. Phil. 3:6); and (4) all true Christians (cf. Phil. 2:15; I Thess. 3:13; 5:23). God's unalterable will for every Christian is not only

heaven later, but Christlikeness now (cf. Rom. 8:29-30; Gal. 4:19; I Pet. 1:2).

Believers are to reflect God's characteristics to a lost world for the purpose of evangelism.

Grammatically the phrase "in love" in this verse could go with either v. 4 or v. 5.

However, when this phrase is used in other places in Ephesians it always refers to human love for God (cf. 3:17; 4:2,15,16).

C. In Eph. 1:5 the phrase "He predestined us" is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. This Greek term is a compound of "before" and "mark off." It refers to God's predetermined redemptive plan (cf. Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 4:28; 17:31; Rom. 8:29-30). Predestination is one of several truths related to mankind's salvation. It is part of a theological pattern or series of related truths. It was never meant to be emphasized in isolation! Biblical truth has been given in a series of tension-filled, paradoxical pairs. Denominationalism has tended to remove the biblical tension by emphasizing only one of the dialectical truths (predestination vs. human free will; security of the believer vs. perseverance of the saints; original sin vs. volitional sin; sinlessness vs. sinning less; instantaneously declared sanctification vs. progressive sanctification; faith vs. works; Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility; transcendence vs. immanence).

God's choice is not based on foreknowledge of human performance, but on His gracious character (cf. vv. 9 & 11). He wishes that all (not just some special ones like the Gnostics or modern-day ultra-Calvinists) would be saved (cf. Ezek. 18:21-23,32; John 3:16-17; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9). God's grace (God's character) is the theological key to this passage (cf. vv. 6a, 7c, 9b), as God's mercy is the key to the other passage on predestination, Rom. 9-11.

Fallen mankind's only hope is the grace and mercy of God (cf. Isa. 53:6 and several other OT texts quoted in Rom. 3:9-18). It is crucial in interpreting these first theological chapters to realize that Paul emphasizes those things which are totally unrelated to human performance: predestination (chap. 1), grace (chap. 2), and God's eternal plan of redemption (mystery, 2:11- 3:13). This was to counterbalance the emphasis of the false teachers on human merit and pride.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PRE-ISRAELITE INHABITANTS OF PALESTINE

A. There are several lists of peoples.

1. Genesis 15:19-21 (10)

- a. Kenite d. Hittite g. Amorite j. Jebusite
- b. Kenizzite e. Perizzite h. Canaanite
- c. Kadmonite f. Rephaim i. Girgashite

2. Exodus 3:17 (6)

- a. Canaanite d. Perizzite
- b. Hittite e. Hivite
- c. Amorite f. Jebusite

3. Exodus 23:28 (3)

- a. Hivites
- b. Canaanites
- c. Hittites

4. Deuteronomy 7:1 (7)

- a. Hittites d. Canaanites g. Jebusites
- b. Girgashites e. Perizzites
- c. Amorites f. Hivites

5. Joshua 24:11 (7)

- a. Amorite d. Hittite g. Jebusite
- b. Perizzite e. Girgashite
- c. Canaanite f. Hivite

B. The origin of the names is dubious because of lack of historical data. Genesis 10:15-19 includes several of them as related to Canaan, a son of Ham.

C. Brief descriptions from the longest list in Gen. 15:19-21

1. Kenite - BDB 884

- non-Israelite
- names related to “forger” or “smith,” which could refer to metal working or music (cf. Gen. 4:19-22)
- connected to the area of Sinai north to Hebron
- name connected to Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law (cf. Jdgs. 1:16; 4:11)

2. Kenizzite - BDB 889

- relative of Jews
- a clan of Edom (cf. Gen. 15:19; 30:15,42)
- lived in Negev
- possibly absorbed into Judah (cf. Num. 32:12; Josh. 14:6,14)

3. Kadmonite - BDB 870 II

- non-Israelite, possibly a descendant of Ishmael (cf. Gen. 25:15).
- name relates to “easterner”
- lived in Negev
- possibly related to “the men of the east” (cf. Job 1:3)

4. Hittite - BDB 366

- non-Israelite
- descendant of Heth
- from kingdom of Anatolia (Asia Minor, Turkey)
- were present very early in Canaan (cf. Genesis 23; Josh. 11:3)

5. Perizzite - BDB 827

- non-Israelite, possibly Hurrians
- lived in forested area of Judah (cf. Gen. 34:30; Jdgs. 1:4; 16:10)

6. Rephaim - BDB 952

- non-Israelite, possibly giants (cf. Gen. 14:5; Num. 33:33; Deut. 2:10-11,20)
- lived on eastern bank of Jordan
- line of warriors/heroes

7. Amorite - BDB 57

- northwestern Semitic people-group from Ham (cf. Gen. 10:16)
- became general designation for inhabitants of Canaan (cf. Gen. 15:16; Deut. 1:7; Josh. 10:5; 24:15; II Sam. 21:2)
- the name may mean “the west”
- the ISBE, vol. 1, p. 119, says the term denotes:

- a. the inhabitants of Palestine generally
- b. the population of the hill country as opposed to the coastal plain
- c. a specific people group with their own king

8. Canaanite - BDB 489

- from Ham (cf. Gen. 10:15)
- general designation of all the tribes in Canaan west of the Jordan
- meaning of Canaan uncertain, possibly “merchant” or “red-purple dye”
- as a people group they dwelt along the coastal plain (cf. Num. 13:29)

9. Gergashite - BDB 173

- from Ham (cf. Gen. 10:16) or at least “from a son of [i.e., the country of] Canaan, ISBE, vol. 2, p. 1232)

10. Jebusite - BDB 101

- from Ham (cf. Gen. 10:16)
- from city of Jebus/Salem/Jerusalem (cf. Josh. 15:63; Jdgs. 19:10)
- Ezek. 16:3,45 asserts they were a mixed race from Amorite and Hittite

11. Hivites - BDB 295

- from Ham (cf. Gen. 10:17)
- translated by LXX as Horite (cf. Gen. 34:2; 36:20-30; Josh. 9:7)
- possibly from the Hebrew word “cave,” therefore cave dwellers
- they lived in the highlands of Lebanon (cf. Josh. 11:3; Jdgs. 3:3). In II Sam. 24:7 they are listed next to Tyre and Sidon

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN LANGUAGE

A. Our language is finite and, therefore, not exhaustive.

1. anthropomorphism (God described in human terms)

a. God with a human body

- (1) walking, Gen. 3:8; 18:33; Lev. 26:12; Deut. 23:14
- (2) eyes, Gen. 6:8; Exod. 33:17
- (3) man on a throne, Isa. 6:1; Dan. 7:9

b. God as female

- (1) Gen. 1:2, Spirit as female bird
- (2) Gen. 17:1 (*El Shaddai*)
- (3) Deut. 32:18, God as mother
- (4) Exod. 19:4, God as mother eagle
- (5) Isa. 49:14-15; 66:9-13 (and possibly Hos. 11:4), God as a nursing mother

c. God as advocating lying, I Kg. 22:19-23

d. NT examples of “God’s right hand,” Luke 22:69; Acts 7:55-56; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 13:1; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; I Pet. 3:22

2. Human titles used to describe God

- a. Shepherd, Ps. 23
- b. Father, Isa. 63:16; Ps. 103:13
- c. *Go’el*, Kinsman redeemer, Exod. 6:6
- d. Lover/husband, Hos. 1-3
- e. Parent, father, and mother, Hos. 11:3-4

3. Physical objects used to describe God

- a. Rock, Ps. 18
- b. Fortress and stronghold, Ps. 18
- c. Shield, Gen. 15:1; Ps. 18
- d. Horn of salvation, Ps. 18
- e. Tree, Hos. 14:8

B. Language is part of the image of God in mankind, but sin has affected all aspects of our existence, including language.

C. God is faithful and communicates to us adequately, if not exhaustively, knowledge about Himself. This is usually in the form of negation, analogy, or metaphor.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DIFFERENT HEBREW TERMS FOR PROPHET

Biblical Terms

1. *ro’eh* = “seer” (BDB 906), I Sam. 9:9. This reference shows the transition to the term *Nabi*, which means “prophet” and comes from the root, “to call.” *Ro’eh* is from the general Hebrew term “to see.” This person understood God’s ways and plans and was consulted to ascertain God’s will in a matter.
2. *hozeh* = “seer” (BDB 302), II Sam. 24:11; Amos 7:12. It is basically a synonym of *ro’eh*. It is from a rarer Hebrew term “to see in a vision.” The PARTICIPLE form is used most often to refer to prophets.
3. *nabi’* = “prophet” (BDB 611), cognate of Akkadian verb *nabu* = “to call” and Arabic *naba’a* = “to announce.” This is the most common OT term to designate a prophet. It is used over 300 times. The exact etymology is uncertain, but “to call” at present seems the best option. Possibly the best understanding comes from YHWH’s description of Moses’ relationship to Pharaoh through Aaron (cf. Exod. 4:10-16; 7:1; Deut. 5:5). A prophet is someone who speaks for God to His people (cf. Amos 3:8; Jer. 1:7,17; Ezek. 3:4).
4. All three terms are used of the prophet’s office in I Chr. 29:29; Samuel - *Ro’eh*; Nathan - *Nabi’*; and Gad - *Hozeh*.

5. The phrase *'ish ha - 'elohim*, “man of God,” is also a broader designation for a speaker for God. It is used some 76 times in the OT in the sense of “prophet.”
6. The NT word “prophet” is Greek in origin. It comes from (1) *pro*, which means “before” or “for”; (2) *phemi*, which means “to speak.”

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY OT COVENANT PROMISES SEEM DIFFERENT FROM NT COVENANT PROMISES

Through the years of my study of eschatology I have learned that most Christians do not have or want a developed, systematized, end-time chronology. There are some Christians who focus or major on this area of Christianity for theological, psychological, or denominational reasons. These Christians seem to become obsessed with how it will all end, and somehow miss the urgency of the gospel! Believers cannot affect God’s eschatological (end-time) agenda, but they can participate in the gospel mandate (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Most believers affirm a Second Coming of Christ and an end-time culmination of the promises of God.

The interpretive problems arising from how to understand this temporal culmination come from several biblical paradoxes.

1. the tension between Old Covenant prophetic models and New Covenant apostolic models
2. the tension between the Bible’s monotheism (one God for all) and the election of Israel (a special people)
3. the tension between the conditional aspect of biblical covenants and promises (“if. . .then”) and the unconditional faithfulness of God to fallen mankind’s redemption
4. the tension between Near Eastern literary genres and modern western literary models
6. the tension between the Kingdom of God as present, yet future.
7. the tension between belief in the imminent return of Christ and the belief that some events must happen first.

Let us discuss these tensions one at a time.

FIRST TENSION (OT racial, national, and geographical categories vs. all believers over all the world)

The OT prophets predict a restoration of a Jewish kingdom in Palestine centered in Jerusalem where all the nations of the earth gather to praise and serve a Davidic ruler, but Jesus nor the NT Apostles ever focus on this agenda. Is not the OT inspired (cf. Matt. 5:17-19)? Have the NT authors omitted crucial end-time events?

There are several sources of information about the end of the world:

1. OT prophets (Isaiah, Micah, Malachi)
2. OT apocalyptic writers (cf. Ezek. 37-39; Dan. 7-12; Zech.)
3. intertestamental, non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writers (like I Enoch, which is alluded to in Jude)
4. Jesus Himself (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
5. the writings of Paul (cf. I Cor. 15; II Cor. 5; I Thess. 4-5; II Thess. 2)
6. the writings of John (I John and Revelation).

Do these all clearly teach an end-time agenda (events, chronology, persons)? If not, why? Are they not all inspired (except the Jewish intertestamental writings)?

The Spirit revealed truths to the OT writers in terms and categories they could understand. However, through progressive revelation the Spirit has expanded these OT eschatological concepts to a universal scope (“the mystery of Christ,” cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13. See Special Topic at 10:7). Here are some relevant examples:

1. The city of Jerusalem in the OT is used as a metaphor of the people of God (Zion), but is projected into the NT as a term expressing God’s acceptance of all repentant, believing humans (the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22). The theological expansion of a literal, physical city into the new people of God (believing Jews and Gentiles) is foreshadowed in God’s promise to redeem fallen

mankind in Gen. 3:15, before there even were any Jews or a Jewish capital city. Even Abraham's call (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) involved the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5).

2. In the OT the enemies of God's people are the surrounding nations of the Ancient Near East, but in the NT they have been expanded to all unbelieving, anti-God, Satanically-inspired people. The battle has moved from a geographical, regional conflict to a worldwide, cosmic conflict (cf. Colossians).
3. The promise of a land which is so integral in the OT (the Patriarchal promises of Genesis, cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:7,15; 17:8) has now become the whole earth. New Jerusalem comes down to a recreated earth, not the Near East only or exclusively (cf. Rev. 21-22).
4. Some other examples of OT prophetic concepts being expanded are:
 - a. the seed of Abraham is now the spiritually circumcised (cf. Rom. 2:28-29)
 - b. the covenant people now include Gentiles (cf. Hos. 1:10; 2:23, quoted in Rom. 9:24-26; also Lev. 26:12; Exod. 29:45, quoted in II Cor. 6:16-18 and Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2, quoted in Titus 2:14)
 - c. the temple is now Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:61; 27:40; John 2:19-21) and through Him the local church (cf. I Cor. 3:16) or the individual believer (cf. I Cor. 6:19)
 - d. even Israel and its characteristic descriptive OT phrases now refer to the whole people of God (i.e., "Israel," cf. Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16, i.e., "kingdom of priests," cf. I Pet. 2:5, 9-10; Rev. 1:6)

The prophetic model has been fulfilled, expanded, and is now more inclusive. Jesus and the Apostolic writers do not present the end-time in the same way as the OT prophets (cf. Martin Wyngaarden, *The Future of The Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*). Modern interpreters who try to make the OT model literal or normative twist the Revelation into a very Jewish book and force meaning into atomized, ambiguous phrases of Jesus and Paul! The NT writers do not negate the OT prophets, but show their ultimate universal implication. There is no organized, logical system to Jesus' or Paul's eschatology. Their purpose is primarily redemptive or pastoral.

However, even within the NT there is tension. There is no clear systemization of eschatological events. In many ways the Revelation surprisingly uses OT allusions in describing the end instead of the teachings of Jesus (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13)! It follows the literary genre initiated by Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, but developed during the intertestamental period (Jewish apocalyptic literature). This may have been John's way of linking the Old and New Covenants. It shows the age-old pattern of human rebellion and God's commitment to redemption! But it must be noted that although Revelation uses OT language, persons, and events, it reinterprets them in light of first century Rome (cf. Rev. 1:7).

SECOND TENSION (monotheism vs. an elect people)

The biblical emphasis is on one personal, spiritual, creator-redeemer, God (cf. Exod. 8:10; Isa. 44:24; 45:5-7,14,18,21-22; 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7). The OT's uniqueness in its own day was its monotheism. All of the surrounding nations were polytheists. The oneness of God is the heart of OT revelation (cf. Deut. 6:4). Creation is a stage for the purpose of fellowship between God and mankind, made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). However, mankind rebelled, sinning against God's love, leadership, and purpose (cf. Gen. 3). God's love and purpose was so strong and sure that He promised to redeem fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15)!

The tension arises when God chooses to use one man, one family, one nation to reach the rest of mankind. God's election of Abraham and the Jews as a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:4-6) caused pride instead of service, exclusion instead of inclusion. God's call of Abraham involved the intentional blessing of all mankind (cf. Gen. 12:3). It must be remembered and emphasized that OT election was for service, not salvation. All Israel was never right with God, never eternally saved based solely on her birthright (cf. John 8:31-59; Matt. 3:9), but by personal faith and obedience (cf. Gen. 15:6, quoted in Rom. 4). Israel lost her mission (the church is now a kingdom of priests, cf. 1:6; II Pet. 2:5,9), turned mandate into privilege, service into a special standing! God chose one to choose all!

THIRD TENSION (conditional covenants vs. unconditional covenants)

There is a theological tension or paradox between conditional and unconditional covenants. It is surely true that God's redemptive purpose/plan is unconditional (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). However, the mandated human response is always conditional!

The "if. . .then" pattern appears in both OT and NT. God is faithful; mankind is unfaithful. This tension has caused much confusion. Interpreters have tended to focus on only one "horn of the dilemma," God's faithfulness or human effort, God's sovereignty or mankind's free will. Both are biblical and necessary.

This relates to eschatology, to God's OT promises to Israel. If God promises it, that settles it! God is bound to His promises; His reputation is involved (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). The unconditional and conditional covenants meet in Christ (cf. Isa. 53), not Israel! God's ultimate faithfulness lies in the redemption of all who will repent and believe, not in who was your father/mother! Christ, not Israel, is the key to all of God's covenants and promises. If there is a theological parenthesis in the Bible, it is not the Church, but Israel (cf. Acts 7 and Gal. 3).

The world mission of gospel proclamation has passed to the Church (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). It is still a conditional covenant! This is not to imply that God has totally rejected the Jews (cf. Rom. 9-11). There may be a place and purpose for end-time, believing Israel (cf. Zech. 12:10).

FOURTH TENSION (Near Eastern literary models vs. western models).

Genre is a critical element in correctly interpreting the Bible. The Church developed in a western (Greek) cultural setting. Eastern literature is much more figurative, metaphorical, and symbolic than modern, western culture's literary models. It focuses on people, encounters, and events more than succinct propositional truths. Christians have been guilty of using their history and literary models to interpret biblical prophecy (both OT and NT). Each generation and geographical entity has used its culture, history, and literalness to interpret Revelation. Every one of them has been wrong! It is arrogant to think that modern western culture is the focus of biblical prophecy!

The genre in which the original, inspired author chooses to write is a literary contract with the reader. The book of Revelation is not historical narrative. It is a combination of letter (chapters 1-3), prophecy, and mostly apocalyptic literature. It is as wrong to make the Bible say more than was intended by the original author as it is to make it say less than what he intended! Interpreters' arrogance and dogmatism are even more inappropriate in a book like Revelation.

The Church has never agreed on a proper interpretation of Revelation. My concern is to hear and deal with the whole Bible, not some selected part(s). The Bible's eastern mind-set presents truth in tension-filled pairs. Our western trend toward propositional truth is not invalid, but unbalanced! I think it is possible to remove at least some of the impasse in interpreting Revelation by noting its changing purpose to successive generations of believers. It is obvious to most interpreters that Revelation must be interpreted in light of its own day and its genre. An historical approach to Revelation must deal with what the first readers would have, and could have, understood. In many ways modern interpreters have lost the meaning of many of the symbols of the book. Revelation's initial main thrust was to encourage persecuted believers. It showed God's control of history (as did the OT prophets); it affirmed that history is moving toward an appointed terminus, judgment or blessing (as did the OT prophets). It affirmed in first century Jewish apocalyptic terms God's love, presence, power, and sovereignty!

It functions in these same theological ways to every generation of believers. It depicts the cosmic struggle of good and evil. The first century details may have been lost to us, but not the powerful, comforting truths. When modern, western interpreters try to force the details of Revelation into their contemporary history, the pattern of false interpretations continues!

It is quite possible that the details of the book may become strikingly literal again (as did the OT in relation to the birth, life, and death of Christ) for the last generation of believers as they face the onslaught of an anti-God leader (cf. II Thess.2) and culture. No one can know these literal fulfillment of the Revelation until the words of Jesus (cf. Matt. 24; Mark.13; and Luke 21) and Paul (cf. I Cor. 15; I Thess. 4-5; and II Thess. 2) also become historically evident. Guessing, speculation, and dogmatism are all inappropriate. Apocalyptic literature allows this flexibility. Thank God for images and

symbols that surpass historical narrative! God is in control; He reigns; He comes!

Most modern commentaries miss the point of the genre! Modern western interpreters often seek a clear, logical system of theology rather than being fair with an ambiguous, symbolic, dramatic genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature. This truth is expressed well by Ralph P. Martin in his article, "Approaches to New Testament Exegesis," in the book *New Testament Interpretation*, edited by I. Howard Marshall:

"Unless we recognize the dramatic quality of this writing and recall the way in which language is being used as a vehicle to express religious truth, we shall grievously err in our understanding of the Apocalypse, and mistakenly try to interpret its visions as though it were a book of literal prose and concerned to describe events of empirical and datable history. To attempt the latter course is to run into all manner of problems of interpretation. More seriously it leads to a distortion of the essential meaning of apocalyptic and so misses the great value of this part of the New Testament as a dramatic assertion in mythopoetic language of the sovereignty of God in Christ and the paradox of his rule which blends might and love (cf. 5:5,6; the Lion is the Lamb)" (p. 235).

W. Randolph Tate in his book *Biblical Interpretations* said:

"No other genre of the Bible has been so fervently read with such depressing results as apocalypse, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. This genre had suffered from a disastrous history of misinterpretation due to a fundamental misunderstanding of its literary forms, structure, and purpose. Because of its very claim to reveal what is shortly to happen, apocalypse has been viewed as a road map into and a blueprint of the future. The tragic flaw in this view is the assumption that the books' frame of reference is the reader's contemporary age rather than the author's. This misguided approach to apocalypse (particularly Revelation) treats the work as if it were a cryptogram by which contemporary events can be used to interpret the symbol of the text. . . First, the interpreter must recognize that apocalyptic communicates its messages through symbolism. To interpret a symbol literally when it is metaphoric is simply to misinterpret. The issue is not whether the events in apocalyptic are historical. The events may be historical; they may have really happened, or might happen, but the author presents events and communicates meaning through images and archetypes" (p. 137).

From *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, edited by Ryken, Wilhost and Longman III:

"Today's readers are often puzzled and frustrated by this genre. The unexpected imagery and out-of-this-world experiences seem bizarre and out of sync with most of Scripture. Taking this literature at face value leaves many readers scrambling to determine 'what will happen when,' thus missing the intent of the apocalyptic message" (p. 35).

FIFTH TENSION (the Kingdom of God as present yet future)

The kingdom of God is present, yet future. This theological paradox becomes focused at the point of eschatology. If one expects a literal fulfillment of all OT prophecies to Israel then the Kingdom becomes mostly a restoration of Israel to a geographical locality and a theological pre-eminence! This would necessitate that the Church is secretly raptured out at chapter 5 and the remaining chapters relate to Israel (but note Rev. 22:16).

However, if the focus is on the kingdom being inaugurated by the promised OT Messiah, then it is present with Christ's first coming, and then the focus becomes the incarnation, life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Christ. The theological emphasis is on a current salvation. The kingdom has come, the OT is fulfilled in Christ's offer of salvation to all, not His millennial reign over some!

It is surely true that the Bible speaks of both of Christ's comings, but where is the emphasis to be placed? It seems to me that most OT prophecies focus on the first coming, the establishment of the Messianic kingdom (cf. Dan. 2). In many ways this is analogous to the eternal reign of God (cf. Dan. 7). In the OT the focus is on the eternal reign of God, yet the mechanism for that reign's manifestation is the ministry of the Messiah (cf. I Cor. 15:26-27). It is not a question of which is true; both are true, but where is the emphasis? It must be said that some interpreters become so focused on the

millennial reign of the Messiah (cf. Rev. 20) that they have missed the biblical focus on the eternal reign of the Father. Christ's reign is a preliminary event. As the two comings of Christ were not obvious in the OT, neither is a temporal reign of the Messiah!

The key to Jesus' preaching and teaching is the kingdom of God. It is both present (in salvation and service), and future (in pervasiveness and power). Revelation, if it focuses on a Messianic millennial reign (cf. Rev. 20), is preliminary, not ultimate (cf. Rev. 21-22). It is not obvious from the OT that a temporal reign is necessary; as a matter of fact, the Messianic reign of Daniel 7 is eternal, not millennial.

SIXTH TENSION (imminent return of Christ vs. the delayed *Parousia*)

Most believers have been taught that Jesus is coming soon, suddenly, and unexpectedly (cf. Matt. 10:23; 24:27,34,44; Mark 9:1; 13:30; Rev. 1:1,3; 2:16; 3:11; 22:7,10,12,20). But every expectant generation of believers so far has been wrong! The soonness (immediacy) of Jesus' return is a powerful promised hope of every generation, but a reality to only one (and that one a persecuted one). Believers must live as if He were coming tomorrow, but plan and implement the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20) if He tarries.

Some passages in the Gospels (cf. Mark 13:10; Luke 17:2; 18:8) and I and II Thessalonians are based on a delayed Second Coming (*Parousia*). There are some historical events that must happen first:

1. world-wide evangelization (cf. Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10)
2. the revelation of "the man of Sin" (cf. Matt. 24:15; II Thess. 2; Rev. 13)
3. the great persecution (cf. Matt. 24:21,24; Rev. 13)

There is a purposeful ambiguity (cf. Matt. 24:42-51; Mark 13:32-36)! Live every day as if it were your last but plan and train for future ministry!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: RACISM

I. Introduction

- A. This is a universal expression by fallen mankind within his society. This is mankind's ego, supporting itself on the backs of others. Racism is, in many ways, a modern phenomena, while nationalism (or tribalism) is a more ancient expression.
- B. Nationalism began at Babel (Gen. 11) and was originally related to Noah's three sons, from whom the so called races developed (Gen. 10). However, it is obvious from Scripture that humanity is from one source (cf. Gen. 1-3; Acts 17:24-26).
- C. Racism is just one of many prejudices. Some others are (1) educational snobbery; (2) socio-economic arrogance; (3) self-righteous religious legalism; and (4) dogmatic political affiliations.

II. Biblical Material

A. Old Testament

1. Gen. 1:27- Mankind, male and female, were made in the image and likeness of God, which makes them unique. It also shows their individual worth and dignity (cf. John 3:16).
2. Gen. 1:11-25 - Records the phrase, "...according to its own kind. . ." ten times. This has been used to support racial segregation. However, it is obvious from the context that this refers to animals and plants and

not to humanity.

3. Gen. 9:18-27 - This has been used to support racial dominance. It must be remembered that God did not curse Canaan. Noah, his father, cursed him after awakening from a drunken stupor. The Bible never records that God confirmed this oath/curse. Even if He did, this does not affect the black race. Canaan was the father of those who inhabited Palestine and the Egyptian wall art shows they were not black.
4. Josh. 9:23 - This has been used to prove one race will serve another. However, in context, the Gibeonites are of the same racial stock as the Jews.
5. Ezra 9-10 and Neh. 13 - These have often been used in a racial sense, but the context shows that the marriages were condemned, not because of race (they were from the same son of Noah, Genesis 10), but for religious reasons.

B. New Testament

1. The Gospels

- a. Jesus made use of the hatred between the Jews and Samaritans on several instances, which shows that racial hatred is inappropriate.

- (1) the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)
- (2) the woman at the well (John 4:4)
- (3) the thankful leper (Luke 17:7-19)

- b. The Gospel is for all humanity

- (1) John 3:16
- (2) Luke 24:46-47
- (3) Hebrews 2:9
- (4) Revelation 14:6

- c. The Kingdom will include all humanity

- (1) Luke 13:29
- (2) Revelation 5

2. Acts

- a. Acts 10 is a definitive passage on God's universal love and the gospel's universal message.
- b. Peter was attacked for his actions in Acts 11 and this problem was not resolved until the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 met and came to a solution. The tension between first century Jews and Gentiles was very intense.

3. Paul

- a. There are no barriers in Christ

- (1) Gal. 3:26-28
- (2) Eph. 2:11-22
- (3) Col. 3:11

b. God is no respecter of persons

(1) Rom. 2:11

(2) Eph. 6:9

4. Peter and James

a. God is no respecter of persons, I Pet. 1:17

b. Because God does not show partiality, then neither should His people, James 2:1

5. John - One of the strongest statements on the responsibility of believers is found in I John 4:20

III. Conclusion

A. Racism, or for that matter, prejudice of any kind, is totally inappropriate for God's children. Here is a quote from Henlee Barnette, who spoke at a forum at Glorieta, New Mexico, for the Christian Life Commission in 1964.

“Racism is heretical because it is unbiblical and unchristian, not to mention unscientific.”

B. This problem gives Christians the opportunity to show their Christlike love, forgiveness and understanding to a lost world. Christian refusal in this area shows immaturity and is an opportunity for the evil one to retard the believer's faith, assurance, and growth. It will also act as a barrier to lost people coming to Christ.

C. What can I do? (This section is taken from a Christian Life Commission tract entitled “Race Relations”).

ON THE PERSONAL LEVEL

- Accept your own responsibility in solving the problems associated with race.
- Through prayer, Bible study, and fellowship with those of other races, strive to rid your life of racial prejudice.
- Express your convictions about race, particularly where those who stir up race hatred are unchallenged.

IN FAMILY LIFE

- Recognize the importance of family influence in the development of attitudes toward other races.
- Seek to develop Christian attitudes by talking over what children and parents hear about the race issue outside the home.
- Parents should be careful to set a Christian example in relating to people of other races.
- Seek opportunities to make family friendships across racial lines.

IN YOUR CHURCH

- By the preaching and teaching of biblical truth relating to race, the congregation

can be motivated to set an example for the entire community.

- Be sure that worship, fellowship, and service through the church is open to all, even as the NT churches observed no racial barriers (Eph. 2:11-22; Gal. 3:26-29).

IN DAILY LIFE

- Help to overcome all racial discrimination in the world of work.
- Work through community organizations of all kinds to secure equal rights and opportunities, remembering that it is the race problem which should be attacked, not people. The aim is to promote understanding, not to create bitterness.
- If it seems wise, organize a special committee of concerned citizens for the purpose of opening lines of communication in the community for education of the general public and for specific actions in improving race relations.
- Support legislation and legislators in the passing of laws promoting racial justice and oppose those who exploit prejudice for political gain.
- Commend law enforcement officials for enforcing the laws without discrimination.
- Shun violence, and promote respect for the law, doing everything possible as a Christian citizen to make sure that legal structures do not become tools in the hands of those who would promote discrimination.
- Exemplify the spirit and mind of Christ in all human relationship.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM

I. OLD TESTAMENT

A. There are primarily two Hebrew legal terms which convey this concept:

1. *Ga'al*, which basically means “to free” by means of a price paid. A form of the term *go'el* adds to the concept, a personal intermediary, usually a family member (i.e., kinsman redeemer). This cultural aspect of the right to buy back objects, animals, land (cf. Lev. 25,27), or relatives (cf. Ruth 4:15; Isa. 29:22) is transferred theologically to YHWH's deliverance of Israel from Egypt (cf. Exod. 6:6; 15:13; Ps. 74:2; 77:15; Jer. 31:11). He becomes “the redeemer” (cf. Job 19:25; Ps. 19:14; 78:35; Prov. 23:1; Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6,24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5,8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16; Jer. 50:34).
2. *Padah*, which basically means “to deliver” or “to rescue”
 - a. the redemption of the first born, Exod. 13:13,14 and Num. 18:15-17
 - b. Physical redemption is contrasted with spiritual redemption, Ps. 49:7,8,15
 - c. YHWH will redeem Israel from their sin and rebellion, Ps. 130:7-8

B. The theological concept involves three related items:

1. There is a need, a bondage, a forfeiting, an imprisonment.
 - a. physical
 - b. social
 - c. spiritual (cf. Ps. 130:8)
2. A price must be paid for freedom, release, and restoration:
 - a. of the nation, Israel (cf. Deut. 7:8)
 - b. of the individual (cf. Job 19:25-27; 33:28)
3. Someone must act as intermediary and benefactor. In *ga'al* this one is usually a family member or near kin (i.e., *go'el*).
4. YHWH often describes Himself in familial terms:
 - a. father
 - b. husband
 - c. near kin

Redemption was secured through YHWH's personal agency; a price was paid, and redemption was achieved!

II. NEW TESTAMENT

A. There are several terms used to convey the theological concept:

1. *Agorazō* (cf. I Cor. 6:20; 7:23; II Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9; 14:34). This is a commercial term which reflects a price paid for something. We are blood-bought people who do not control our own lives. We belong to Christ.
2. *Exagorazō* (cf. Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). This is also a commercial term. It reflects Jesus' substitutionary death on our behalf. Jesus bore the "curse" of a performance-based law (i.e., Mosaic Law), which sinful humans could not accomplish. He bore the curse (cf. Deut. 21:23) for us all! In Jesus, God's justice and love merge into full forgiveness, acceptance, and access!
3. *Luō*, "to set free"
 - a. *Lutron*, "a price paid" (cf. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). These are powerful words from Jesus' own mouth concerning the purpose of His coming, to be the Savior of the world by paying a sin-debt He did not owe (cf. John 1:29).
 - b. *Lutroō*, "to release"
 - (1) to redeem Israel, Luke 24:21
 - (2) to give Himself to redeem and purify a people, Titus 2:14
 - (3) to be a sinless substitute, I Pet. 1:18-19
 - c. *Lutrōsis*, "redemption, deliverance, or liberation"
 - (1) Zacharias' prophecy about Jesus, Luke 1:68
 - (2) Anna's praise to God for Jesus, Luke 2:38
 - (3) Jesus' better, once offered sacrifice, Heb. 9:12

4. *Apolytrōsis*

a. redemption at the Second Coming (cf. Acts 3:19-21)

- (1) Luke 21:28 (3) Ephesians 1:14; 4:30
- (2) Romans 8:23 (4) Hebrews 9:15

b. redemption in Christ's death

- (1) Romans 3:24 (3) Ephesians 1:7
- (2) I Corinthians 1:30 (4) Colossians 1:14

5. *Antilytron* (cf. I Tim. 2:6). This is a crucial text (as is Titus 2:14), which links release to Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross. He is the one and only acceptable sacrifice; the one who dies for "all" (cf. John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:2; 4:14).

B. The theological concept in the NT implies:

- 1. mankind is enslaved to sin (cf. John 8:34; Rom. 3:10-18; 6:23).
- 2. mankind's bondage to sin has been revealed by the OT Mosaic Law (cf. Gal. 3) and Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 5-7). Human performance has become a death sentence (cf. Col. 2:14).

C. Jesus, the sinless lamb of God, has come and died in our place (cf. John 1:29; II Cor. 5:21). We have been purchased from sin so that we might serve God (cf. Rom. 6).

D. By implication both YHWH and Jesus are "near kin" who act on our behalf. This continues the familial metaphors (i.e., father, husband, son, brother, near kin).

E. Redemption was not a price paid to Satan (i.e., medieval theology), but the reconciliation of God's word and God's justice with God's love and full provision in Christ. At the cross peace was restored, human rebellion was forgiven, the image of God in mankind is now fully functional again in intimate fellowship!

F. There is still a future aspect of redemption (cf. Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30), which involves our resurrection bodies and physical intimacy with the Triune God.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE RED SEA

I. Name

A. Literally the name is *Yam Suph*.

- 1. "Sea of Weeds" or "Sea of Reeds" (Egyptian root)
- 2. "Sea at the end (of the earth)" (Semitic root)

B. This can refer to

- 1. salt water, I Kgs. 9:26 (Gulf of Aqaba); Jonah 2:5 (Mediterranean Ocean)
- 2. fresh water, Exod. 2:3; Isa. 19:26

C. The Septuagint is the first translation to call it "the Red Sea." Possibly these translators were

relating it to the sea of Edom (red). This designation was perpetuated by the Latin Vulgate and later the King James English translation.

II. Location

A. There are several bodies of water referred to by this name:

1. the narrow body of water between Egypt and the Sinai peninsula about 190 miles long (Gulf of Suez)
2. the body of water between the Sinai peninsula and Arabia about 112 miles long (Gulf of Aqaba)

B. It could relate to the shallow marsh area in the northeastern part of the Nile delta close to Tanis, Zoan, Avaris, Rameses, which is on the southern shore of Lake Menzaleh (the marshy region).

C. It could be used metaphorically of the mysterious waters to the south, often used of the sea at the end (of the earth). This means it could refer to

1. modern Red Sea (Gulf of Suez or the Gulf of Akaba, cf. I Kgs. 9:26)
2. Indian Ocean (cf. Herodotus 1.180)
3. Persian Gulf (cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 1.7.3)

III. *Suph* in Numbers 33

A. In Num. 33:8 the body of water that was miraculously divided is called *suph*.

B. In Num. 33:10,11 the Israelites are said to camp by *yam suph*.

C. There are two different bodies of water.

1. the first is not the Red Sea (Gulf of Suez)
2. the second is probably the Red Sea (Gulf of Suez)

D. The term *suph* is being used in the OT in three ways.

1. body of water parted by YHWH to allow the Israelites to pass, but the Egyptian soldiers to drown
2. the northwestern extension of the Red Sea (Gulf of Suez)
3. the northeastern extension of the Red Sea (gulf of Akaba)

E. *Yam suph* possibly does not mean “reed sea” because

1. there were/are no reeds (papyrus) in the Red Sea (salt water)
2. the supposed Egyptian etymology refers to a land, not a lake

F. *Suph* could come from the Semitic root “end” and refer to the mysterious unknown waters to the south (see Bernard F. Batts, “Red Sea or Reed Sea? What *Yam Suph* Really Means” in *Approaches to the Bible*, vol. 1, pp. 291-304).

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE REMNANT, THREE SENSES

The OT concept of “a faithful remnant” is a recurrent theme of the Prophets (mostly in the eighth century prophets and Jeremiah). It is used in three senses:

1. those who survived the Exile (e.g., Isa. 10:20-23; 17:4-6; 37:31-32; Jer. 42:15,19; 44:12,14,28; Amos 1:8)

2. those who remain faithful to YHWH (e.g., Isa. 4:1-5; 11:11,16; 28:5; Joel 2:32; Amos 5:14-15; Micah 2:12-13; 4:6-7; 5:7-9; 7:18-20)

3. those who are a part of the eschatological renewal and recreation (e.g., Amos 9:11-15)

In this context God chooses only some (those with a faithful zeal) of the remnant (survivors of the Exile) to return to Judah. As we have seen before in this chapter, themes from Israel's past recur (v. 6). God is reducing the numbers so that He can show His power, provision, and care (e.g., Gideon, Jdgs. 6-7).

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

This concept is crucial but difficult to define. Most of us have a definition which comes from our denominational affiliation. However, usually a "set" theological definition is imposed on several Hebrew (and Greek) words which do not specifically imply this "set" definition. It must be remembered that NT authors (except Luke) were Hebrew thinkers using Koine Greek terms, so the place to start is the Hebrew terms themselves, of which there are primarily two.

1. *nhm* (BDB 636, KB 688)

2. *swb* (BDB 996, KB 1427)

The first, *nhm*, which originally seems to have meant to draw a deep breath, is used in several senses.

a. "rest" or "comfort" (e.g., Gen. 5:29; 24:67; 27:42; 37:35; 38:12; 50:12; often used in names, cf. II Kgs. 15:14; I Chr. 4:19; Neh. 1:1; 7:7; Nahum 1:1)

b. "grieved" (e.g., Gen. 6:6,7)

c. "changed mind" (e.g., Exod. 13:17; 32:12,14; Num. 23:19)

d. "compassion" (e.g., Deut. 32:36)

Notice that all of these involve deep emotion! Here is the key: deep feelings that lead to action. This change of action is often directed at other persons, but also toward God. It is this change of attitude and action toward God that infuses this term with such theological significance. But here care must be exercised. God is said to "repent" (cf. Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:11,35; Ps. 106:45), but this does not result from sorrow over sin or error, but a literary way of showing God's compassion and care (cf. Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; Ps. 110:4; Jer. 4:27-28; Ezek.24:14). Due punishment for sin and rebellion is forgiven if the sinner truly turns away from his/her/their sin and turns to God.

This term has a wide semantical field. Context is crucial in determining its intended meaning.

The second term, *swb*, means "to turn" (turn from, turn back, turn to). If it is true that the two covenant requirements are "repentance" and "faith" (e.g., Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:4,15; 2:17; Luke 3:3,8; 5:32; 13:3,5; 15:7; 17:3), then *nhm* refers to the intense feelings of recognizing one's sin and turning from it, while *swb* would refer to the turning from sin to the turning to God (one example of these two spiritual actions is Amos 4:6-11, "you have not returned to Me" [five times] and Amos 5:4,6,14, "seek Me. . .seek the Lord. . .seek good and not evil").

The first great example of the power of repentance is David's sin with Bathsheba (cf. II Sam. 12; Ps. 32, 51). There were continuing consequences for David, his family, and Israel, but David was restored to fellowship with God! Even wicked Manasseh can repent and be forgiven (cf. II Chr. 33:12-13).

Both of these terms are used in parallel in Ps. 90:13. There must be a recognition of sin and a purposeful, personal turning from it, as well as a desire to seek God and His righteousness (cf. Isa. 1:16-20). Repentance has a cognitive aspect, a personal aspect, and a moral aspect. All three are required, both to start a new relationship with God and to maintain the new relationship. The deep emotion of regret turns into an abiding devotion to God and for God!

SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Righteousness” is such a crucial topic that a Bible student must make a personal extensive study of the concept.

In the OT God’s character is described as “just” or “righteous.” The Mesopotamian term itself comes from a river reed which was used as a construction tool to judge the horizontal straightness of walls and fences. God chose the term to be used metaphorically of His own nature. He is the straight edge (ruler) by which all things are evaluated. This concept asserts God’s righteousness as well as His right to judge.

Man was created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6). Mankind was created for fellowship with God. All of creation is a stage or backdrop for God and mankind’s interaction. God wanted His highest creation, mankind, to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and be like Him! Mankind’s loyalty was tested (cf. Gen. 3) and the original couple failed the test. This resulted in a disruption of the relationship between God and humanity (cf. Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12-21).

God promised to repair and restore the fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:15). He does this through His own will and His own Son. Humans were incapable of restoring the breach (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20).

After the Fall, God’s first step toward restoration was the concept of covenant based on His invitation and mankind’s repentant, faithful, obedient response. Because of the Fall, humans were incapable of appropriate action (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3). God Himself had to take the initiative to restore covenant-breaking humans. He did this by

1. declaring mankind righteous through the work of Christ (i.e., forensic righteousness).
2. freely giving mankind righteousness through the work of Christ (i.e., imputed righteousness).
3. providing the indwelling Spirit who produces righteousness (i.e., Christlikeness, the restoration of the image of God) in mankind.

However, God requires a covenantal response. God decrees (i.e., freely gives) and provides, but humans must respond and continue to respond in

1. repentance
2. faith
3. lifestyle obedience
4. perseverance

Righteousness, therefore, is a covenantal, reciprocal action between God and His highest creation. It is based on the character of God, the work of Christ, and the enabling of the Spirit, to which each individual must personally and continually respond appropriately. The concept is called “justification by faith.” The concept is revealed in the Gospels, but not in these terms. It is primarily defined by Paul, who uses the Greek term “righteousness” in its various forms over 100 times.

Paul, being a trained rabbi, uses the term *dikaïosunē* in its Hebrew sense of the term *SDQ* used in the Septuagint, not from Greek literature. In Greek writings the term is connected to someone who conformed to the expectations of deity and society. In the Hebrew sense it is always structured in covenantal terms. YHWH is a just, ethical, moral God. He wants His people to reflect His character. Redeemed mankind becomes a new creature. This newness results in a new lifestyle of godliness (Roman Catholic focus of justification). Since Israel was a theocracy, there was not clear delineation between the secular (society’s norms) and the sacred (God’s will). This distinction is expressed in the Hebrew and Greek terms being translated into English as “justice” (relating to society) and “righteousness” (relating to religion).

The gospel (good news) of Jesus is that fallen mankind has been restored to fellowship with God. This has been accomplished through the Father’s love, mercy, and grace; the Son’s life, death, and resurrection; and the Spirit’s wooing

and drawing to the gospel. Justification is a free act of God, but it must issue in godliness (Augustine's position, which reflects both the Reformation emphasis on the freeness of the gospel and the Roman Catholic emphasis on a changed life of love and faithfulness). For Reformers the term "the righteousness of God" is an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE (i.e., the act of making sinful mankind acceptable to God [positional sanctification], which for the Catholic it is a SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, which is the process of becoming more like God [experiential progressive sanctification]. In reality it is surely both!!)

In my view all of the Bible, from Genesis 4 - Revelation 20 is a record of God's restoring the fellowship of Eden. The Bible starts with God and mankind in fellowship in an earthly setting (cf. Genesis 1-2) and the Bible ends with the same setting (cf. Revelation 21-22). God's image and purpose will be restored!

To document the above discussions note the following selected NT passages illustrating the Greek word group:

1. God is righteous (often connected to God as Judge)

- a. Romans 3:26
- b. II Thessalonians 1:5-6
- c. II Timothy 4:8
- d. Revelation 16:5

2. Jesus is righteous

- a. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14 (title of Messiah)
- b. Matthew 27:19
- c. I John 2:1,29; 3:7

3. God's will for His creation is righteousness

- a. Leviticus 19:2
- b. Matthew 5:48 (cf. 5:17-20)

4. God's means of providing and producing righteousness

- a. Romans 3:21-31
- b. Romans 4
- c. Romans 5:6-11
- d. Galatians 3:6-14
- e. Given by God

- 1) Romans 3:24; 6:23
- 2) I Corinthians 1:30
- 3) Ephesians 2:8-9

f. Received by faith

- 1) Romans 1:17; 3:22,26; 4:3,5,13; 9:30; 10:4,6,10
- 2) I Corinthians 5:21

g. Through acts of the Son

- 1) Romans 5:21-31
- 2) II Corinthians 5:21
- 3) Philippians 2:6-11

5. God's will is that His followers be righteous

- a. Matthew 5:3-48; 7:24-27
- b. Romans 2:13; 5:1-5; 6:1-23
- c. I Timothy 6:11
- d. II Timothy 2:22; 3:16
- e. I John 3:7
- f. I Peter 2:24

6. God will judge the world by righteousness

- a. Acts 17:31
- b. II Timothy 4:8

Righteousness is a characteristic of God, freely given to sinful mankind through Christ. It is

- 1. a decree of God
- 2. a gift of God
- 3. an act of Christ

But it is also a process of becoming righteous that must be vigorously and steadfastly pursued, which will one day be consummated at the Second Coming. Fellowship with God is restored at salvation, but progresses throughout life to become a face-to-face encounter at death or the Parousia!

Here is a good quote to conclude this discussion. It is taken from A Dictionary of Paul and His Letters published by IVP:

“Calvin, more so than Luther, emphasizes the relational aspect of the righteousness of God. Luther’s view of the righteousness of God seems to contain the aspect of acquittal. Calvin emphasizes the marvelous nature of the communication or imparting of God’s righteousness to us” (p. 834).

For me the believer’s relationship to God has three aspects:

- 1. the gospel is a person (emphasis of the Eastern Church and Calvin)
- 2. the gospel is truth (emphasis of Augustine and Luther)
- 3. the gospel is a changed life (emphasis of the Roman Catholic church)

They are all true and must be held together for a healthy, sound, biblical Christianity. If any one is over emphasized or depreciated, problems occur.

We must welcome Jesus!

We must believe the gospel!

We must pursue Christlikeness!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ROUTE OF THE EXODUS

A. The location of: (1) the Egyptian cities; (2) bodies of water; and (3) early Hebrew camp sites are all uncertain.

B. The term “Red Sea” is literally *Yam Suph*, which

- 1. means, “sea of weeds” or “sea of reeds.” It can refer to salt water, Jonah 2:5; I Kgs. 9:26 or fresh water, Exod. 2:3; Isa. 19:26. The LXX first translated it as “Red Sea,” followed by the Vulgate and then the King James Version.
- 2. referred to the “sea to the south” or “sea at the end (of the earth).” It could have referred to the modern Red Sea, Indian Ocean or Persian Gulf.
- 3. had several usages in the OT (cf. Num. 33:8,10).

C. There are three possible routes involving three different bodies of water:

1. A northern route - this was along the Mediterranean coast, following the commercial highway known as “the way of the Philistines.” This would have been the shortest way to the Promised Land. The body of water that they would have encountered would have been one of the shallow, marshy areas called: Lake Sirbonis or Lake Menzalah. However, one must take into account Exod. 13:17, which seems to negate this option. Also the presence of Egyptian fortresses along this route militates against this option.
2. A middle route - this would involve the central lakes called
 - a. “The Bitter Lakes”
 - b. “Lake Balah”
 - c. “Lake Timsah”

This would also have been following a caravan route through the wilderness of Shur.

3. A southern route - this would involve the large body of salt water we call the Red Sea today. There was also a caravan route from this area that linked up with the “King’s Highway” (the transJordan road to Damascus) at Ezion-Geber.
 - a. militating against this is the absence of reeds in this body of water
 - b. pointing toward this is that I Kgs. 9:26 says Ezion-Geber is on the Yam-Suph. This would be the Gulf of Aqaba or part of the Red Sea (cf. Num. 21:4; Deut. 27; Jdgs. 11:16; Jer. 49:12).
4. Numbers 33 clearly shows the problem. In v. 8a they “pass through the sea,” then in v. 10 they camped by the “Red Sea,” a different body of water.
5. Whichever body of water was crossed, it was a miracle of God. Israel was provided weaponry from the dead Egyptian soldiers who floated to their side of the body of water, another miracle, Exod. 14:30; 15:4-5.
6. It is possible from other literature that “the *yam suph*” was the uncharted, mysterious body of water to the south. In some literature the Indian Ocean or the bay of Bengali is called “*yom suph*.”

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: SABBATH

This term (BDB 992) means “rest” or “cessation of activity.” The usage as a day of worship starts with Gen. 2:2-3, where YHWH uses His rest as a pattern for animals (cf. Exod. 23:12) and mankind (humans need a regular schedule of work, rest, and worship). The first specialized use of this day by Israel was in Exod. 16:25-26 in the gathering of manna. It then becomes part of “the Ten Words” (cf. Exod. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15). This is one example where the Ten Words in Exodus 20 are slightly different from the Ten Words in Deuteronomy 5. Deuteronomy is preparing Israel for the settled, agricultural life in Canaan.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: SACRIFICES IN MESOPOTAMIA AND ISRAEL AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

I. Ritual laws in Mesopotamia

A. Sacrifice was primarily a meal offered to a god. The altar was the table of the god where the

meal was placed. Beside the altar was the incense brazier which was to attract the god's attention. There was no ritual implication in the blood. The sword bearer cut the throat of the animal. The food was shared between the gods, the priest-king and the attendants. The offerer received nothing.

- B. There was no expiatory sacrifice.
- C. Sickness or pain was punishment from the gods. An animal was brought and destroyed; this acted as a substitute for the offerer.
- D. Israel's ritual was different and distinct. It seems to have originated in a person giving back to God part of his labor for necessary food (cf. Gen. 4:1-4; 8:20-22).

II. Ritual laws in Canaan (similar to Israel's)

A. Sources

- 1. biblical accounts
- 2. Phoenician literature
- 3. *Ras Shamra Tablets* from Ugarit concerning Canaanite deities and mythology from about 1400 B.C.

- B. Israel's and Canaan's sacrifices are very much alike. However, there is no emphasis placed on the blood of the victim in Canaan sacrifices.

III. Ritual Laws in Egypt

- A. Sacrifices were offered but not emphasized
- B. The sacrifice was not important but the attitude of the sacrificer was
- C. Sacrifices were made to stop the wrath of the gods
- D. The offerer hoped for deliverance or forgiveness

IV. Israel's Sacrificial System - Israel's sacrifices were closer to Canaan's although not necessarily related to them at all.

A. Descriptive Phrases

- 1. Sacrifice was a spontaneous expression of mankind's need for God.
- 2. The OT laws which regulate sacrifice cannot be said to initiate sacrifice (cf. Gen. 7:8; 8:20).
- 3. Sacrifice was an offering (animal or grain).
- 4. Must be an offering that was wholly or partially destroyed upon an altar in homage to God.
- 5. The altar was the place of sacrifice and symbolized the Divine presence.
- 6. Sacrifice was an act of external worship (a prayer which was acted out).
- 7. The definition of sacrifice is "acted prayers" or "ritualized prayers." The significance of ritual and our cultural bias against it is revealed in Gordon J. Wenham (*Tyndale Commentary Series*, "Numbers," p. 25-39). Leviticus and Numbers both contain large amounts of this type of material which shows its importance to Moses and Israel.

B. Sacrifice involved

- 1. Gifts to God
 - a. involve acknowledgment that all of the earth is the Lord's
 - b. all that a person has, he owes to God

- c. therefore, it is right that people bring tribute to God
- d. it was a special kind of tribute or gift. It was something that the man needed to sustain his own existence. It was more than just giving something, it was something he needed. It was giving a part of himself to God.
- e. by destroying the gift it cannot be reclaimed
- f. a burnt offering becomes invisible and goes up to God's realm
- g. earlier altars were erected in places where God appeared. The altar came to be looked upon as a holy place, therefore, the offering was brought there.

2. Expressing consecration of one's entire life to God

- a. The burnt offering was one of three voluntary sacrifices.
- b. The entire animal was burnt to express to God deep-felt homage.
- c. This was a very expressive gift to God.

3. Fellowship with God

- a. communion aspect of sacrifice
- b. an example would be the peace offering which symbolized God and man in fellowship
- c. sacrifice was made to obtain or regain this fellowship

4. Expiation of sin

- a. when man sinned he had to ask God to restore the relationship (covenant) which man had broken
- b. there was no communal meal with the sin offering because of the broken relationship
- c. the significance of blood
 - (1) placed on altar for man
 - (2) placed on veil for priest
 - (3) placed on mercy seat for High Priest and the nation (Lev. 16)
- d. there were two types of sin offerings. The second is called the guilt offering or trespass offering. In it the offender was to restore to his fellow Israelite that which was taken or damaged along with the animal sacrifice.
- e. there was no sacrifice for premeditated or intentional sin, 4:1, 22, 27; 5:15-18; 22:14

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: SACRIFICIAL SYSTEMS OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

(These notes are part of my OT Survey notes)

I. Ritual laws in Mesopotamia

- A. Sacrifice was primarily a meal offered to a god. The altar was the table of the god where the meal was placed. Beside the altar was the incense brazier which was to attract the

god's attention. There was no ritual implication in the blood. The swordbearer cut the throat of the animal. The food was shared between the gods, the priest-king, and the attendants. The offerer received nothing.

- B. There was no expiatory sacrifice.
- C. Sickness or pain was punishment from the gods. An animal was brought and destroyed; this acted as a substitute for the offerer.
- D. Israel's ritual was different and distinct. It seems to have originated in a person giving back to God part of his labor for necessary food (cf. Gen. 4:1-4; 8:20-22).

II. Ritual laws in Canaan (very similar to Israel's)

A. Sources

- 1. biblical accounts
- 2. Phoenician literature
- 3. Ras Shamra Tablets from Ugarit concerning Canaanite deities and mythology from about 1400 B.C.

- B. Israel's and Canaan's sacrifices are very much alike. However, there is no emphasis placed on the blood of the victim in Canaan sacrifices.

III. Ritual Laws in Egypt

- A. Sacrifices were offered but not emphasized.
- B. The sacrifice was not important but the attitude of the sacrificer was.
- C. Sacrifices were made to stop the wrath of the gods.
- D. The offerer hoped for deliverance or forgiveness.

IV. Israel's Sacrificial System - Israel's sacrifices were closer to Canaan's although not necessarily related to them at all.

A. Descriptive Phrases

- 1. Sacrifice was a spontaneous expression of mankind's need for God.
- 2. The OT laws which regulate sacrifice cannot be said to initiate sacrifice (cf. Gen. 7:8; 8:20).
- 3. Sacrifice was an offering (animal or vegetable).
- 4. Must be an offering that was wholly or partially destroyed upon an altar in homage to God.
- 5. The altar was the place of sacrifice and symbolized the divine presence.
- 6. Sacrifice was an act of external worship (a prayer which was acted out).
- 7. The definition of sacrifice is "acted prayers" or "ritualized prayers." The significance of ritual and our cultural bias against it is revealed in Gordon J. Wenham (Tyndale, *Numbers*, p. 25-39). Leviticus and Numbers both contain large amounts of this type of material, which shows its importance to Moses and Israel.

B. Sacrifice Involved

- 1. Gifts to God
 - a. involve acknowledgment that all of the earth is the Lord's
 - b. all that a person has, he owes to God
 - c. therefore, it is right that people bring tribute to God
 - d. it was a special kind of tribute or gift. It was something that the man

needed to sustain his own existence. It was more than just giving something, it was something he needed. It was giving a part of himself to God.

- e. by destroying the gift it cannot be reclaimed
- f. a burnt offering becomes invisible and goes up to God's realm
- g. earlier altars were erected in places where God appeared. The altar came to be looked upon as a holy place, therefore, the offering was brought there.

2. Expressing consecration of one's entire life to God

- a. The burnt offering was one of three voluntary sacrifices.
- b. The entire animal was burnt to express to God our deep felt homage.
- c. This was a very expressive gift to God.

3. Fellowship with God

- a. communion aspect of sacrifice
- b. an example would be the peace offering which symbolized God and man in fellowship
- c. sacrifice was made to obtain or regain this fellowship

4. Expiation of sin

- a. when man sinned he had to ask God to restore the relationship (covenant) which man had broken
- b. there was no communal meal with the sin offering because of the broken relationship
- c. the significance of blood
 - (1) placed on altar for man
 - (1) placed on veil for priest
 - (2) placed on mercy seat for High Priest and the nation (Lev. 16)
- d. there were two types of sin offerings. The second is called the guilt offering or trespass offering. In it the offender was to restore to his fellow Israelite that which was taken or damaged along with the animal sacrifice.
- e. there was no sacrifice for premeditated or intentional sin, 4:1, 22, 27; 5:15-18; 22:14

V. Procedures from Leviticus for the Different Sacrifices

A. Leviticus 1

1. Introductory Formula, "The Lord spoke to Moses," 1:1-2; 4:1; 5:14; 6:1,19; 7:22, 28

- a. From the herd or flock
- b. "When," v. 2, shows that this was not mandatory but voluntary

2. Burnt Offering, vv. 3-17 (6:8-13)

- a. Altar

- (1) The brazen altar, which was also called altar of burnt offering, altar by door of Tabernacle, or altar of shittim wood, covered with bronze (cf. Exodus 27)
- (2) this distinguished it from the incense altar (golden altar) in the Holy Place (cf. Exodus 30)
- (3) coals from brazen altar were taken to incense altar
- (4) brazen altar was right in the middle of the entrance of the Tabernacle
- (5) altar had horns which were its most sacred part. The blood was applied to the horns (cf. Exod. 30:10).
- (6) The horns were possibly for:
 - (a) symbol of hands to hold offering up
 - (b) symbol of strength or prevailing power (Deut. 33:17; II Sam. 22:3.)
 - (c) later, anyone who grabbed the horns of the altar was safe until his case was decided by the court (I Kgs. 1:50-51; 2:28)

b. The Offering

- (1) bullock without blemish which was mentioned first because of its importance and cost, v. 3
- (2) male goat or sheep, v. 10
- (3) turtle doves or young pigeons, v. 14 (provision for the poor)

c. Place of Burnt Offering was at the door of the Tent of Meeting

d. Laying on of the Hands - this was only for the bulls, not for goats, sheep or birds, v. 4

- (1) the offerer did this himself (not the priest)
- (2) many feel it was a symbolic action of the transferring of guilt
- (3) some believe it meant that
 - (a) this animal comes from this particular individual
 - (b) the sacrifice was to be presented in the offerer's name
 - (c) the fruit of this sacrifice belongs to the one who placed his hands on the animal

e. Slaughtering

- (1) bull - “before the Lord” by the man making the sacrifice. The offerer had to kill, skin, and cut up the animal. The priest’s role (except in case of public sacrifices) began when the man brought the animal to the altar.
- (2) sheep or goat, v. 11 - “on north side of altar before the Lord.” This designated a specific place for these lesser animals.
- (3) bird - The priest killed and offered this sacrifice. The offerer had to remove the bird’s crop.

f. Handling of the Blood

(1) animals

- (a) The priest threw blood against the altar, and sprinkled it round about the altar.
- (b) The life of the animal was in the blood (cf. Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11). Life already belonged to God, therefore, the blood represented no part of the gift of the man.
- (c) The bird’s blood was drained on the side of the altar and not consumed in fire.

g. Handling of the Flesh

(1) bull, v. 6

- (a) The offerer skinned the offering. The priest could keep the skin (cf. 7:8)
- (b) The offerer cut it into pieces
- (c) The priest placed the offering on the altar in an arrangement as it was when alive
- (d) The legs and entrails were washed with water from the laver
- (e) The priest burned the whole animal on altar

3. Occasion of Burnt Offerings

- a. Feast of Tabernacles, Booths
- b. Day of Atonement
- c. Feast of Weeks, First Fruits, or Pentecost

- d. Feast of Trumpets
- e. Wave Sheaf (Lev. 23)
- f. Feast of Unleavened Bread, Passover
- g. Beginning of months, New Moon
- h. Sabbath

4. Significance of Burnt Offering

- a. A gift to God
- b. Seen as the most valuable kind of sacrifice
- c. It seems to deal with the concept of sin in general or thanksgiving
- d. Most perfect representation of sacrificial idea
- e. Symbolic offering of one's life
- f. Represents complete consecration of the life of an individual to the service of God
- g. Graded value of offering
 - (1) bull
 - (2) sheep - goat
 - (3) birds
- h. This shows that anyone conscious of spiritual need could approach God. God made provision for all men.

5. Special Instructions for Priest, 6:8-12

- a. Burnt offering remained all night on hearth of the altar
- b. Fire was to be kept burning continually under a burnt offering
- c. Instructions involving the Priest's dress
- d. Instructions involving the removal of the ashes

B. Leviticus 2:1-16 (6:14-23)

1. Introduction

- a. This chapter deals with the grain offering
- b. Grain offering was from the root meaning "gift." It became a technical term for non-animal, or vegetable gifts.
- c. After the Exile the grain offering appears as a supplement to the burnt offering and peace offering and the rabbis say it could be offered alone by the very poor.
- d. Salt covenant was also mentioned in Num. 18:19 and II Chr. 13:5. Salt was the opposite of leaven. It was used as a symbol of the covenant of God because it was non-corruptible and lasting.

2. The Grain Offering involved one's labor being given to God.

- a. It was a gift to God from the daily food of the people.
- b. It was generally a supplement (especially in post-exile days) to the burnt or peace offering.
- c. Sacrifice was God's provision for the priest. Only a small part was burnt as a memorial of the whole.
- d. The word "memorial" describes the offered portion, or that part

which brings the whole before the Lord.

- e. New Testament concept of the Lord's Supper as "memorial" expresses this Old Testament concept.
- f. The distinction between the terms "holy" and "most holy" are:

- (1) "holy" - priest and family could eat it at any clean place
- (2) "most holy" - could only be eaten by the priests and in court of Tent of Meeting

3. Types

- a. Unbaked flour (for the rich), 2:1-3
- b. Baked loaves or cake, 2:4-11
- c. Green ears of corn or wheat (for the poor), 2:12-16

- (1) Unbaked flour was the highest offering. It was the very best of wheat flour.

- (2) Baked cakes

- (a) oil was an ingredient
- (b) prepared in oven, v. 4.
- (c) on a baking iron, v. 5.
- (d) in an earthen frying pan, v. 7.

- (3) Green ears of corn or wheat

- (a) must be parched
- (b) broken into coarse grits
- (c) arranged like a meal set before guests.

4. Ingredients

- a. Fine flour corresponded to an animal without blemish
- b. Oil was a symbol of prosperity and, therefore, a symbol of God's presence

- (1) Used for food, sacrificing, medicine, and anointing
- (2) Possibly use of oil was to replace offering of oil

- c. Frankincense was from India or Arabia

- (1) Seen as a very pure thing with a wonderful fragrance
- (2) Symbolized prayer and praise

- d. Salt

- (1) Life-giving as well as preserving qualities
- (2) Possibly more for table fellowship than for preserving

- e. Elements excluded

- (1) Leaven excluded, v. 11

- (a) possibly because of fermentation
- (b) leaven associated with corruption

- (c) could be offered with first fruits and to priest

(2) Honey excluded

- (a) syrup was from fruit not honeybee
- (b) possibly because of its use in Canaanite ritual

5. Ritual of Offering

- a. It was brought to the priest. He handled the whole ceremony (2:2, 9, 16).
- b. Part of the offering was to be eaten by priest in the sanctuary. It was most holy.

6. Significance

- a. Present from inferior to superior
- b. Burning of a portion of it represented the consecration of a portion of one's labor to God
- c. Apparent meaning
 - (1) Burnt offering - consecration of one's life
 - (2) Meal offering - dedication of one's daily labor

7. Special Instructions for Grain Offering, 6:14-23

- a. Offering in front of altar
- b. Labor offered the gift to God, but in reality it supported the priesthood

C. Leviticus 3:1-17 (7:13-34), Peace Offering

1. Introduction

- a. Why
 - (1) communion offering
 - (2) covenant sacrifice
 - (3) corporate offering
 - (4) concluding sacrifice
- b. It expressed thankfulness to God because of fellowship with God, family, and friends.
- c. It was usually the final act in a series of sacrifices in which reconciliation had been established.
- d. The burnt offering expressed the costliness of obedience, while the peace offering expressed the joy and happiness of fellowship with God.
- e. Male or female but without blemish
- f. Varieties of offering
 - (1) from herd; male or female
 - (2) the distinction that was made between the sheep and the

goat was because of the fat of the
tail of the sheep

- (a) lamb of flock - male or female
- (b) goat of flock - male or female

2. Ritual

a. Presentation of offering

- (1) Laid hands on offering
- (2) Killed it at door of the Tent of meeting
- (3) Identification of sacrifice was the same as the burnt offering
- (4) Sprinkling of blood around altar
- (5) Burning of choice parts on altar to God

- (a) fat (sheep-fatty tail) symbolized prosperity
- (b) kidneys, lobe of liver symbolized the seat of the will and emotions
- (c) fatty portions placed on offerer's burnt offering or on morning lamb offering

b. Thanksgiving offering included (7:11-14)

- (1) Unleavened cake mixed with oil
- (2) Unleavened wafers spread with oil
- (3) Fine flour mixed with oil

3. Priest's Portion, 7:28-34

- a. Breast belonged to priest as a wave offering
- b. Waving involves the placing of the offering upon the offerer's hands and the priest's hands. It showed the offering offered by the offerer to God, and then its reception back by the priest.
- c. Right thigh belonged to officiating priest
- d. Heave offering was lifted to God and received back by the priest

4. Offerer's Portion, 7:15-18

- a. A Thanksgiving Offering shall be eaten on day of giving, v. 15
- b. A Votive (vow) or freewill offering shall be eaten on day of offering or on the next day, v. 16
- c. This portion was all that was not given to God and by God to the priest
- d. God symbolically eats with the offerer and his family and friends in this offering
- e. This offering stresses that fellowship relationships have been restored

D. Leviticus 4:1-5:13 (6:24-30) SIN OFFERING

1. Introduction

- a. This is the first offering in which atonement was the dominant element.
- b. This sacrifice re-establishes the covenant between man and God. It restores fellowship.
- c. This offering involves:
 - (1) Sins of ignorance
 - (2) Sins of inadvertence
 - (3) Sins of passion
 - (4) Sins of omission
 - (5) It did not atone for sins committed intentionally in haughty rebellion against God. There was no sacrifice for intentional, high handed, premeditated sin (cf. Num. 15:27-31).

2. Meaning

- a. This offering expiated the guilt and punishment for sins.
- b. This involved grace on God's part and faith on man's part.
- c. No sacrifice achieves anything by mere ritual offering. It was the offerer's faith behind the act.
- d. Yet, sacrifice was more than the mere expression of the offerer. It did something for him. It re-established the relationship with God.
- e. Ritual was a God-given means of restitution, not a substitute for personal faith.
- f. God hates any religious action without accompanying faith, Isa. 1:10-20; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8.

3. Ritual

- a. For the High Priest, vv. 3-12

(1) High priest - anointed priest

- (a) Sin, in leading people wrongly
- (b) Sin, in a personal nature
- (c) The high priest, being the spiritual representative of the community. If he sins, all sinned in him. This was the Jewish understanding of corporality (cf. Joshua 7; Romans 5:12ff).

(2) Procedures

- (a) The High Priest brought a young bullock

without blemish
to altar

- (b) He laid hands on its head
- (c) The High Priest slaughtered animal
- (d) The High Priest sprinkled the blood before
the veil 7 times

- i. this cleansed the Tabernacle
- ii symbolically opened the way to
God
- iii. blood placed on horns of
incense altar
- iv. blood remaining poured out at
base of altar of burnt offering

- (e) He placed all the fat on the altar to be
burned
- (f) All the rest of the animal will be taken
outside the camp
to a clean place,
v. 12, where the
ashes are poured
out from altar.
There, the
remainder of the
animal is burned.

b. For the Nation, vv. 13-21

- (1) They sinned when commands of the law were not met,
vv. 13-21.

(2) Procedures

- (a) The Elders brought a young bullock without
blemish to altar.
- (b) The Elders laid hands on head.
- (c) The Elders slaughtered the animal.
- (d) The High Priest sprinkled the blood before
veil 7 times.

- i. this cleansed Tabernacle
- ii. symbolically opened the way to
God
- iii. blood placed on horns of
incense
altar
- iv. rest poured out at base of altar
of
sacrifice

- (e) All of it offered on the altar
- (f) All the rest of the animal was taken outside
the camp to a
clean place, v. 12,

where the ashes
were poured out
from the altar.
There the
remainder of the
animal was
burned.

c. For leader, vv. 22-26

(1) Leader (ruler) vv. 22-26

- (a) Leader of tribe
- (b) Responsible person in community
- (c) Elder

(2) Procedures

- (a) The leader brought a male goat (old, shaggy goat) to altar.
- (b) The leader laid hands on its head.
- (c) The leader slaughtered the animal.
- (d) A High Priest placed blood on horns of altar of burnt offering-the rest of blood poured out at base of altar of sacrifice.
- (e) All fat is burned on the altar.
- (f) Priests ate the rest of the flesh.

d. For individual, vv. 27-35

(1) For individual - when he learned he had sinned he was to make this offering

(2) Procedures

- (a) The individual brought a female goat or female lamb.
- (b) The individual laid hands on its head.
- (c) The individual slaughtered the animal.
- (d) A priest placed blood on horns of altar of sacrifice-rest poured out at base of altar.
- (e) All fat placed on altar and burned.
- (f) Priests ate the rest of the flesh.

e. Special cases involving the sin offering, 5:1-13 (These seem to involve intentional sin against a covenant partner)

- (1) If a witness doesn't come forward and testify (failure to give information), 5:1
- (2) Touching unclean animal, 5:2

- (3) Touching unclean human, 5:3
- (4) Speaking thoughtlessly with an oath, 5:4
- (5) offering for the above sins:

- (a) Female goat or sheep
- (b) Two turtledoves or two pigeons
- (c) 1/10 ephah of fine flour

f. Sin offering ritual, 6:24-30

- (1) Priest could eat what was left.
- (2) If blood got on clothes, clothes must be washed.
- (3) If blood got on earthen vessel, vessel was broken.
- (4) If blood got on brass vessel, vessel was washed.
- (5) If burnt offering's blood was brought into Holy Place,
then the flesh must be burnt and
not eaten by priest.

g. Significance of the sin offering

- (1) There is no offering for premeditated sin—only for
inadvertent sin or sins of
ignorance, 5:15, 18.
- (2) What does forgiveness involve:
 - (a) Man's part is faith
 - (b) God's part is mercy

E. Leviticus 5:14-19 GUILT OR TRESPASS OFFERING

1. Introduction

- a. While the Sin Offering dealt with sin committed, the Guilt Offering had to do with the damage that was done to a covenant partner and what restitution was possible.
- b. The sin and trespass offerings were very similar.
- c. The rights of the individual were expressed in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5).
 - (1) home
 - (2) accumulation of good
 - (3) life
- d. This offering emphasizes the harm done to our brother in sinning and the restitution of the cost of that which was damaged plus 1/5 more.

2. Sins Requiring an Offering

- a. Against God or that which belongs to Him
 - (1) first fruits
 - (2) firstborn, 14-16
 - (3) tithe
 - (4) offering given incorrectly

(5) gifts of inferior value

- b. “If a person sins and does any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, though he was unaware, still he is guilty, and shall bear his punishment.”

F. Ancient sacrifices were offered to

1. appease an angry deity
2. feed a deity
3. communicate with a deity
4. praise a deity
5. foster a sense of forgiveness or reconciliation

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: SATAN

This is a very difficult subject for several reasons.

1. The OT reveals not an arch enemy of good, but a servant of YHWH who offers mankind an alternative and also accuses mankind of unrighteousness. There is only one God (monotheism), one power, one cause in the OT—YHWH.
2. The concept of a personal arch-enemy of God developed in the interbiblical (non-canonical) literature under the influence of Persian dualistic religions (*Zoroastrianism*). This, in turn, greatly influenced rabbinical Judaism and the Essene community (i.e. Dead Sea Scrolls).
3. The NT develops the OT themes in surprisingly stark, but selective, categories.

If one approaches the study of evil from the perspective of biblical theology (each book or author or genre studied and outlined separately), then very different views of evil are revealed. If, however, one approaches the study of evil from a non-biblical or extra-biblical approach of world religions or eastern religions, then much of the NT development is foreshadowed in Persian dualism and Greco-Roman spiritism.

If one is presuppositionally committed to the divine authority of Scripture, then the NT development must be seen as progressive revelation. Christians must guard against allowing Jewish folk lore or western literature (Dante, Milton) to further influence the concept. There is certainly mystery and ambiguity in this area of revelation. God has chosen not to reveal all aspects of evil, its origin, its development, its purpose, but He has revealed its defeat!

In the OT the term “satan” or “accuser” can relate to three separate groups.

1. human accusers, I Sam. 29:4; II Sam. 19:22; I Kgs. 11:14,20,29; Ps. 109:6
2. angelic accusers, Num. 22:22-23; Job 1-2; Zech. 3:1
3. demonic accusers, I Chr. 21:1; I Kgs. 22:21; Zech. 13:2

Only later in the intertestamental period is the serpent of Genesis 3 identified with Satan (cf. Book of Wisdom 2:23-24; II Enoch 31:3), and even later does this become a rabbinical option (cf. Sot 9b and Sanh. 29a). The “sons of God” of Gen. 6 become angels in I Enoch 54:6. I mention this, not to assert its theological accuracy, but to show its development. In the NT these OT activities are attributed to angelic, personified evil (cf. I Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9). The origin of personified evil is difficult or impossible (depending on your point of view) to determine from the OT. One reason for this is Israel’s strong monotheism (cf. I Kgs. 22:20-22; Eccl. 7:14; Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6). All causality was attributed to YHWH to demonstrate His uniqueness and primacy (cf. Isa. 43:11; 44:6,8,24; 45:5-6,14,18,21,22).

Sources of possible information are (1) Job 1-2, where Satan is one of the “sons of God” (i.e. angels) or (2) Isa. 14; Ezek. 28, where prideful near-eastern kings (Babylon and Tyre) are possibly used to illustrate the pride of Satan (cf. I Tim. 3:6). I have mixed emotions about this approach. Ezekiel uses Garden of Eden metaphors, not only for the king of

Tyre as Satan (cf. Ezek. 28:12-16), but also for the king of Egypt as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Ezek. 31). However, Isa. 14, particularly vv. 12-14, seems to describe an angelic revolt through pride. If God wanted to reveal to us the specific nature and origin of Satan, this is a very oblique way and place to do it. We must guard against the trend of systematic theology of taking small, ambiguous parts of different testaments, authors, books, and genres and combining them as pieces of one divine puzzle.

I agree with Alfred Edersheim (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, vol. 2, appendices XIII [pp. 748-763] and XVI [pp.770-776]) that rabbinical Judaism has been overly influenced by Persian dualism and demonic speculation. The rabbis are not a good source for truth in this area. Jesus radically diverges from the teachings of the Synagogue in this area. I think that the concept of an arch-angelic enemy of YHWH, as well as mankind. The two high gods of Persian dualism, Ahkiman and Ormazd, good and evil, were developed into a biblical dualism of YHWH and Satan.

There is surely progressive revelation in the NT as to the personification of evil, but not as elaborate as the rabbis. A good example of this difference is the “war in heaven.” The fall of Satan is a logical necessity, but the specifics are not given. Even what is given is veiled in apocalyptic genre (cf. Rev. 12:4,7,12-13). Although Satan is defeated in Jesus and exiled to earth, he still functions as a servant of YHWH (cf. Matt. 4:1; Luke 22:31-32; I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20).

We must curb our curiosity in this area. There is a personal force of temptation and evil, but there is still only one God and we are still responsible for our choices. There is a spiritual battle, both before and after salvation. Victory can only come and remain in and through the Triune God. Evil has been defeated and will be removed!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SERPENT

A. The term “serpent” is *Nachash* (BDB 638). It has several possible etymologies:

1. *Kal Stem* - “to hiss”
2. *Piel Stem* - “to whisper” as in sorcery or divination
3. From 4:22 - “to shine” possibly related to the term “bronze”
4. From Arabic root - “to creep”

B. The definite article is present which shows one particular snake or personified entity.

C. The literalness of the serpent is bolstered by:

1. It is listed as just one of the beasts of the field that God had created.
2. Its punishment in 3:14 as a literal animal.
3. It is alluded to specifically in the NT, II Cor. 11:3 and I Tim. 2:13-14.

D. The serpent was specifically identified with Satan in:

1. The inter-testamental book of “Wisdom,” 2:23-24. “For God created man to be immortal; . . . nevertheless, through envy of the Devil came death into the world.”
2. Irenaeus (about A.D. 130-202)
3. Revelation 12:9; 20:2
4. This identification is absent from the OT itself because it does not discuss Genesis 3 at any length. It is not even mentioned or interpreted in any other OT book.

E. Why Satan is not specifically named – The emphasis of the text is on mankind’s responsibility, not on supernatural temptation. In Romans 1-3 where man’s sinfulness is presented and 4-8 where its effects are noted, Satan is never mentioned.

SPECIAL TOPIC: “the sons of God” in Genesis 6

A. There is great controversy over the identification of the phrase “the sons of God.” There have been three major interpretations

1. the phrase refers to the godly line of Seth (cf. Genesis 5, see note at 4:14)
2. the phrase refers to a group of angelic beings
3. the phrase refers to the kings or tyrants or Cain’s line (cf. Genesis 4)

B. Evidence for the phrase referring to Seth’s line

1. the immediate literary context of Genesis 4 and 5 shows the development of the rebellious line of Cain and the chosen line of Seth. Therefore, contextual evidence seems to favor the godly line of Seth
2. the rabbis have been divided over their understanding of this passage. Some assert that it refers to Seth (but most to angels).
3. the plural phrase “the sons of God,” though most often used for angelic beings, rarely refers to human beings
 - a. Deut. 14:1; 32:5
 - b. Psalm 73:15; 82:1-4
 - c. Hosea 1:10

C. Evidence for the phrase referring to angelic beings

1. this has been the most common traditional understanding of the passage. The larger context of Genesis could support this view as another example of supernatural evil trying to thwart God’s will for mankind (the rabbis say out of jealousy)
2. the plural phrase (“sons of God”) is used overwhelmingly in the OT for angels
 - a. Job 1:6
 - b. Job 2:1
 - c. Job 38:7
 - d. Daniel 3:25
 - e. Psalm 29:1
 - f. Psalm 89:6, 7
3. the inter-testamental book of I Enoch (cf. I Enoch 6:1-8:4; 12:4-6; 19:1-3; 21:1-10) and *Jubilees* (cf. Job 5:1), which was very popular among believers in the NT period, along with the *Genesis Apocryphon* from the Dead Sea Scrolls, interprets these as rebellious angels
4. the immediate context of chapter 6 seems to imply that “the mighty men who were of old, men of renown” came from this improper mixing of the orders of creation
5. the Septuagint translates the phrase “sons of God” as “angels of God”
6. I Enoch even asserts that Noah’s Flood came to destroy this angelic/human union which was hostile towards YHWH and His plan for creation (cf. I Enoch 7:1ff; 15:1ff; 86:1ff)
7. in Ugaritic literature “sons of God” refers to members of the pantheon (i.e. lesser spiritual beings)

D. Evidence for the phrase referring to kings or tyrants of Cain’s line

1. there are several ancient translations that support this view

- a. Targum of Onkelos (second century A.D.) translates “sons of God” as “sons of nobles”
- b. Symmachus (second century A.D.) Greek translation of the OT, translated “sons of God” as “the sons of the kings”
- c. the term “*elohim*” is used of Israelite leaders (cf. Ex. 21:6; 22:8; Ps. 82:1,6)
- d. *Nephilim* linked to *Gibborim* in Gen 6:4, *Gibborim* is from *Gibbor* meaning “ a mighty man of valor; strength; wealth or power
- e. this interpretation and its evidence is taken from Hard Sayings of the Bible pp. 106-108.

E. Historical evidence of the advocates of both usages

1. the phrase refers to Sethites

- a. Cyril of Alexander
- b. Theodoret
- c. Augustine
- d. Jerome
- e. Calvin
- f. Kyle
- g. Gleason Archer
- h. Watts

2. the phrase refers to angelic beings

- a. writers of the Septuagint i. Luther
- b. Philo j. Ewald
- c. Josephus (*Antiquities* 1:3:1) k. Delitzsch
- d. Justin Martyr l. Hengstenberg
- e. Irenaeus m. Olford
- f. Clement of Alexandria n. Westermann
- g. Tertullian o. Wenham
- h. Origen p. NET Bible

F. How are the “Nephilim” of Gen. 6:4 related to the “sons of God” and “the daughters of men” of Gen. 6:1-2?

1. They are the resultant giants (cf. Num. 13:33) of the union between angels and human women.
2. They do not relate at all. They are simply mentioned as being on the earth in the days of the events of Gen. 6:1-2 and also afterwards.
3. R. K. Harrison in *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 557, has the following cryptic quote, “to miss entirely the invaluable anthropological insights into the interrelation of *Homo sapiens* and pre-Adamic species which the passage contains, and which are amenable to those scholars who are equipped to pursue them.”
This implies to me that he sees these two groups as representing differing groups of humanoids. This would imply a later special creation of Adam and Eve, but also an evolutionary development of *Homo erectus*.

G. It is only fair to disclose my own understanding of this controversial text. First, let me remind all of us that the text in Genesis is brief and ambiguous. Moses’ first hearers must have had additional historical insight or Moses used oral or written tradition from the Patriarchal period that he himself

did not fully understand. This issue is not a crucial theological subject. We are often curious about things the Scriptures only hint at but are ambiguous. It would be very unfortunate to build an elaborate theology out of this and similar fragments of biblical information. If we needed this information God would have provided it in a more clear and complete form. I personally believe it was angels and humans because:

1. the consistent, although not exclusive, use of the phrase “sons of God” for angels in the OT
2. the Septuagint (Alexandrian) translates (late first century B.C.) “sons of God” as “angels of God”
3. the pseudepigraphal apocalyptic book of I Enoch (possibly written about 200 B.C.) is very specific that it refers to angels (cf. chapters 6-7)
4. the theological link to II Pet. 2 and Jude of angels who sinned and did not keep their proper abode

I know that to some this seems to contradict Matt. 22:30, but these specific angels are neither in heaven nor earth but in a special prison (*Tartarus*).

5. I think that one reason many of the events of Gen. 1-11 are found in other cultures (i.e. similar creation accounts, similar flood accounts, similar accounts of angels taking women) is because all humans were together and had some knowledge of YHWH during this period, but after the tower of Babel's dispersion this knowledge became corrupted and adapted to a polytheistic model.

A good example of this is Greek mythology where the half human/half superhuman giants called Titans are imprisoned in *Tartarus*, this very name used only once in the Bible (cf. II Pet. 2) for the holding place of the angels that did not keep their proper abode. In rabbinical theology Hades was divided into a section for the righteous (paradise) and a section for the wicked (*Tartarus*).

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: SYMBOLIC NUMBERS IN SCRIPTURE

A. Certain numbers functioned both as numerals and symbols:

1. One - God (e.g., Deut. 6:4; Eph. 4:4-6)
2. Six - human imperfection (one less than 7, e.g., Rev. 13:18)
3. Seven - divine perfection (the seven days of creation). Notice the symbolic usages in Revelation:
 - a. seven candlesticks, 1:13,20; 2:1
 - b. seven stars, 1:16,20; 2:1
 - c. seven churches, 1:20
 - d. seven spirits of God, 3:1; 4:5; 5:6
 - e. seven lamps, 4:5
 - f. seven seals, 5:1,5
 - g. seven horns and seven eyes, 5:6
 - h. seven angels, 8:2,6; 15:1,6,7,8; 16:1; 17:1
 - i. seven trumpets, 8:2,6
 - j. seven thunders, 10:3,4
 - k. seven thousand, 11:13
 - l. seven heads, 13:1; 17:3,7,9
 - m. seven plagues, 15:1,6,8; 21:9
 - n. seven bowls, 15:7

- o. seven kings, 17:10
- p. seven vials, 21:9

4. Ten - completeness

a. use in Gospels:

- (1) Matt. 20:24; 25:1,28
- (2) Mark 10:41
- (3) Luke 14:31; 15:8; 17:12,17; 19:13,16,17,24,25

b. use in Revelation:

- (1) 2:10, ten days of tribulation
- (2) 12:3; 17:3,7,12,16, ten horns
- (3) 13:1, ten crowns

c. multiples of 10 in Revelation:

- (1) 144,000 = $12 \times 12 \times 10$, cf. 7:4; 14:1,3
- (2) 1,000 = $10 \times 10 \times 10$, cf. 20:2,3,6

5. Twelve - human organization

- a. twelve sons of Jacob (i.e., twelve tribes of Israel, Gen. 35:22; 49:28)
- b. twelve pillars, Exod. 24:4
- c. twelve stones on breast plate of High Priest, Exod. 28:21; 39:14
- d. twelve loaves, for table in Holy Place (symbolic of God's provision for the twelve tribes), Lev. 24:5; Exod. 25:30
- e. twelve spies, Deut. 1:23; Josh. 3:22; 4:2,3,4,8,9,20
- f. twelve apostles, Matt. 10:1
- g. use in Revelation:

- (1) twelve thousand sealed, 7:5-8
- (2) twelve stars, 12:1
- (3) twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve tribes, 21:12
- (4) twelve foundation stones, names of the twelve apostles, 21:14
- (5) New Jerusalem was twelve thousand stadia squared, 21:16
- (6) twelve gates made of twelve pearls, 21:12
- (7) tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit, 22:2

6. Forty = number for time:

- a. sometimes literal (exodus and wilderness wanderings, e.g., Exod. 16:35); Deut. 2:7; 8:2
- b. can be literal or symbolic
 - (1) flood, Gen. 7:4,17; 8:6
 - (2) Moses on Mt. Sinai, Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9,11,18,25
 - (3) divisions of Moses life:
 - (a) forty years in Egypt
 - (b) forty years in the desert
 - (c) forty years leading Israel

(4) Jesus fasted forty days, Matt. 4:2; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2

c. Note (by means of a Concordance) the number of times this number appears in time designation in the Bible!

7. Seventy - round number for people:

- a. Israel, Exod. 1:5
- b. seventy elders, Exod. 24:1,9
- c. eschatological, Dan. 9:2,24
- d. mission team, Luke 10:1,17
- e. forgiveness (70x7), Matt. 18:22

B. Good references

- 1. John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology*
- 2. D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: “TENSIONS” (TAKEN FROM CRUCIAL INTRODUCTION TO VOL. 12, MY COMMENTARY ON REVELATION)

FIRST TENSION (OT racial, national, and geographical categories vs. all believers over all the world)

The OT prophets predict a restoration of a Jewish kingdom in Palestine centered in Jerusalem where all the nations of the earth gather to praise and serve a Davidic ruler, but Jesus nor the NT Apostles ever focus on this agenda. Is not the OT inspired (cf. Matt. 5:17-19)? Have the NT authors omitted crucial end-time events?

There are several sources of information about the end of the world:

- 1. OT prophets (Isaiah, Micah, Malachi)
- 2. OT apocalyptic writers (cf. Ezek. 37-39; Dan. 7-12; Zech.)
- 3. intertestamental, non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writers (like I Enoch, which is alluded to in Jude)
- 4. Jesus Himself (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
- 5. the writings of Paul (cf. I Cor. 15; II Cor. 5; I Thess. 4-5; II Thess. 2)
- 6. the writings of John (I John and Revelation).

Do these all clearly teach an end-time agenda (events, chronology, persons)? If not, why? Are they not all inspired (except the Jewish intertestamental writings)?

The Spirit revealed truths to the OT writers in terms and categories they could understand. However, through progressive revelation the Spirit has expanded these OT eschatological concepts to a universal scope (“the mystery of Christ,” cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13. See Special Topic at 10:7). Here are some relevant examples:

- 1. The city of Jerusalem in the OT is used as a metaphor of the people of God (Zion), but is projected into the NT as a term expressing God’s acceptance of all repentant, believing humans (the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22). The theological expansion of a literal, physical city into the new people of God (believing Jews and Gentiles) is foreshadowed in God’s promise to redeem fallen mankind in Gen. 3:15, before there even were any Jews or a Jewish capital city. Even Abraham’s call (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) involved the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5).
- 2. In the OT the enemies of God’s people are the surrounding nations of the Ancient Near East, but in the NT they have been expanded to all unbelieving, anti-God, Satanically-inspired people. The battle has moved from a geographical, regional conflict to a worldwide, cosmic conflict (cf. Colossians).
- 3. The promise of a land which is so integral in the OT (the Patriarchal promises of Genesis, cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:7,15; 17:8) has now become the whole earth. New Jerusalem comes down to a recreated

earth, not the Near East only or exclusively (cf. Rev. 21-22).

4. Some other examples of OT prophetic concepts being expanded are:

- a. the seed of Abraham is now the spiritually circumcised (cf. Rom. 2:28-29)
- b. the covenant people now include Gentiles (cf. Hos. 1:10; 2:23, quoted in Rom. 9:24-26; also Lev. 26:12; Exod. 29:45, quoted in II Cor. 6:16-18 and Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2, quoted in Titus 2:14)
- c. the temple is now Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:61; 27:40; John 2:19-21) and through Him the local church (cf. I Cor. 3:16) or the individual believer (cf. I Cor. 6:19)
- d. even Israel and its characteristic descriptive OT phrases now refer to the whole people of God (i.e., "Israel," cf. Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16, i.e., "kingdom of priests," cf. I Pet. 2:5, 9-10; Rev. 1:6)

The prophetic model has been fulfilled, expanded, and is now more inclusive. Jesus and the Apostolic writers do not present the end-time in the same way as the OT prophets (cf. Martin Wyngaarden, *The Future of The Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*). Modern interpreters who try to make the OT model literal or normative twist the Revelation into a very Jewish book and force meaning into atomized, ambiguous phrases of Jesus and Paul! The NT writers do not negate the OT prophets, but show their ultimate universal implication. There is no organized, logical system to Jesus' or Paul's eschatology. Their purpose is primarily redemptive or pastoral.

However, even within the NT there is tension. There is no clear systemization of eschatological events. In many ways the Revelation surprisingly uses OT allusions in describing the end instead of the teachings of Jesus (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13)! It follows the literary genre initiated by Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, but developed during the intertestamental period (Jewish apocalyptic literature). This may have been John's way of linking the Old and New Covenants. It shows the age-old pattern of human rebellion and God's commitment to redemption! But it must be noted that although Revelation uses OT language, persons, and events, it reinterprets them in light of first century Rome (cf. Rev. 1:7).

SECOND TENSION (monotheism vs. an elect people)

The biblical emphasis is on one personal, spiritual, creator-redeemer, God (cf. Exod. 8:10; Isa. 44:24; 45:5-7, 14, 18, 21-22; 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7). The OT's uniqueness in its own day was its monotheism. All of the surrounding nations were polytheists. The oneness of God is the heart of OT revelation (cf. Deut. 6:4). Creation is a stage for the purpose of fellowship between God and mankind, made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). However, mankind rebelled, sinning against God's love, leadership, and purpose (cf. Gen. 3). God's love and purpose was so strong and sure that He promised to redeem fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15)!

The tension arises when God chooses to use one man, one family, one nation to reach the rest of mankind. God's election of Abraham and the Jews as a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:4-6) caused pride instead of service, exclusion instead of inclusion. God's call of Abraham involved the intentional blessing of all mankind (cf. Gen. 12:3). It must be remembered and emphasized that OT election was for service, not salvation. All Israel was never right with God, never eternally saved based solely on her birthright (cf. John 8:31-59; Matt. 3:9), but by personal faith and obedience (cf. Gen. 15:6, quoted in Rom. 4). Israel lost her mission (the church is now a kingdom of priests, cf. 1:6; II Pet. 2:5, 9), turned mandate into privilege, service into a special standing! God chose one to choose all!

THIRD TENSION (conditional covenants vs. unconditional covenants)

There is a theological tension or paradox between conditional and unconditional covenants. It is surely true that God's redemptive purpose/plan is unconditional (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). However, the mandated human response is always conditional!

The "if. . . then" pattern appears in both OT and NT. God is faithful; mankind is unfaithful. This tension has caused much confusion. Interpreters have tended to focus on only one "horn of the dilemma," God's faithfulness or human effort, God's sovereignty or mankind's free will. Both are biblical and necessary.

This relates to eschatology, to God's OT promises to Israel. If God promises it, that settles it! God is bound to His promises; His reputation is involved (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). The unconditional and conditional covenants meet in Christ (cf. Isa. 53), not Israel! God's ultimate faithfulness lies in the redemption of all who will repent and believe, not in who was your father/mother! Christ, not Israel, is the key to all of God's covenants and promises. If there is a theological parenthesis in the Bible, it is not the Church, but Israel (cf. Acts 7 and Gal. 3).

The world mission of gospel proclamation has passed to the Church (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). It is still a conditional covenant! This is not to imply that God has totally rejected the Jews (cf. Rom. 9-11). There may be a place and purpose for end-time, believing Israel (cf. Zech. 12:10).

FOURTH TENSION (Near Eastern literary models vs. western models).

Genre is a critical element in correctly interpreting the Bible. The Church developed in a western (Greek) cultural setting. Eastern literature is much more figurative, metaphorical, and symbolic than modern, western culture's literary models. It focuses on people, encounters, and events more than succinct propositional truths. Christians have been guilty of using their history and literary models to interpret biblical prophecy (both OT and NT). Each generation and geographical entity has used its culture, history, and literalness to interpret Revelation. Every one of them has been wrong! It is arrogant to think that modern western culture is the focus of biblical prophecy!

The genre in which the original, inspired author chooses to write is a literary contract with the reader. The book of Revelation is not historical narrative. It is a combination of letter (chapters 1-3), prophecy, and mostly apocalyptic literature. It is as wrong to make the Bible say more than was intended by the original author as it is to make it say less than what he intended! Interpreters' arrogance and dogmatism are even more inappropriate in a book like Revelation.

The Church has never agreed on a proper interpretation of Revelation. My concern is to hear and deal with the whole Bible, not some selected part(s). The Bible's eastern mind-set presents truth in tension-filled pairs. Our western trend toward propositional truth is not invalid, but unbalanced! I think it is possible to remove at least some of the impasse in interpreting Revelation by noting its changing purpose to successive generations of believers. It is obvious to most interpreters that Revelation must be interpreted in light of its own day and its genre. An historical approach to Revelation must deal with what the first readers would have, and could have, understood. In many ways modern interpreters have lost the meaning of many of the symbols of the book. Revelation's initial main thrust was to encourage persecuted believers. It showed God's control of history (as did the OT prophets); it affirmed that history is moving toward an appointed terminus, judgment or blessing (as did the OT prophets). It affirmed in first century Jewish apocalyptic terms God's love, presence, power, and sovereignty!

It functions in these same theological ways to every generation of believers. It depicts the cosmic struggle of good and evil. The first century details may have been lost to us, but not the powerful, comforting truths. When modern, western interpreters try to force the details of Revelation into their contemporary history, the pattern of false interpretations continues!

It is quite possible that the details of the book may become strikingly literal again (as did the OT in relation to the birth, life, and death of Christ) for the last generation of believers as they face the onslaught of an anti-God leader (cf. II Thess.2) and culture. No one can know these literal fulfillment of the Revelation until the words of Jesus (cf. Matt. 24; Mark.13; and Luke 21) and Paul (cf. I Cor. 15; I Thess. 4-5; and II Thess. 2) also become historically evident. Guessing, speculation, and dogmatism are all inappropriate. Apocalyptic literature allows this flexibility. Thank God for images and symbols that surpass historical narrative! God is in control; He reigns; He comes!

Most modern commentaries miss the point of the genre! Modern western interpreters often seek a clear, logical system of theology rather than being fair with an ambiguous, symbolic, dramatic genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature. This truth is expressed well by Ralph P. Martin in his article, "Approaches to New Testament Exegesis," in the book *New Testament Interpretation*, edited by I. Howard Marshall:

"Unless we recognize the dramatic quality of this writing and recall the way in which language is being used

as a vehicle to express religious truth, we shall grievously err in our understanding of the Apocalypse, and mistakenly try to interpret its visions as though it were a book of literal prose and concerned to describe events of empirical and datable history. To attempt the latter course is to run into all manner of problems of interpretation. More seriously it leads to a distortion of the essential meaning of apocalyptic and so misses the great value of this part of the New Testament as a dramatic assertion in mythopoetic language of the sovereignty of God in Christ and the paradox of his rule which blends might and love (cf. 5:5,6; the Lion is the Lamb)” (p. 235).

W. Randolph Tate in his book *Biblical Interpretations* said:

“No other genre of the Bible has been so fervently read with such depressing results as apocalypse, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. This genre had suffered from a disastrous history of misinterpretation due to a fundamental misunderstanding of its literary forms, structure, and purpose. Because of its very claim to reveal what is shortly to happen, apocalypse has

been viewed as a road map into and a blueprint of the future. The tragic flaw in this view is the assumption that the books’ frame of reference is the reader’s contemporary age rather than the author’s. This misguided approach to apocalypse (particularly Revelation) treats the work as if it were a cryptogram by which contemporary events can be used to interpret the symbol of the text. . .First, the interpreter must recognize that apocalyptic communicates its messages through symbolism. To interpret a symbol literally when it is metaphoric is simply to misinterpret. The issue is not whether the events in apocalyptic are historical. The events may be historical; they may have

really happened, or might happen, but the author presents events and communicates meaning through images and archetypes” (p. 137).

From *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, edited by Ryken, Wilhost and Longman III:

“Today’s readers are often puzzled and frustrated by this genre. The unexpected imagery and out-of-this-world experiences seem bizarre and out of sync with most of Scripture. Taking this literature at face value leaves many readers scrambling to determine ‘what will happen when,’ thus missing the intent of the apocalyptic message” (p. 35).

FIFTH TENSION (the Kingdom of God as present yet future)

The kingdom of God is present, yet future. This theological paradox becomes focused at the point of eschatology. If one expects a literal fulfillment of all OT prophecies to Israel then the Kingdom becomes mostly a restoration of Israel to a geographical locality and a theological pre-eminence! This would necessitate that the Church is secretly raptured out at chapter 5 and the remaining chapters relate to Israel (but note Rev. 22:16).

However, if the focus is on the kingdom being inaugurated by the promised OT Messiah, then it is present with Christ’s first coming, and then the focus becomes the incarnation, life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Christ. The theological emphasis is on a current salvation. The kingdom has come, the OT is fulfilled in Christ’s offer of salvation to all, not His millennial reign over some!

It is surely true that the Bible speaks of both of Christ’s comings, but where is the emphasis to be placed? It seems to me that most OT prophecies focus on the first coming, the establishment of the Messianic kingdom (cf. Dan. 2). In many ways this is analogous to the eternal reign of God (cf. Dan. 7). In the OT the focus is on the eternal reign of God, yet the mechanism for that reign’s manifestation is the ministry of the Messiah (cf. I Cor. 15:26-27). It is not a question of which is true; both are true, but where is the emphasis? It must be said that some interpreters become so focused on the millennial reign of the Messiah (cf. Rev. 20) that they have missed the biblical focus on the eternal reign of the Father. Christ’s reign is a preliminary event. As the two comings of Christ were not obvious in the OT, neither is a temporal reign of the Messiah!

The key to Jesus’ preaching and teaching is the kingdom of God. It is both present (in salvation and service), and future (in pervasiveness and power). Revelation, if it focuses on a Messianic millennial reign (cf. Rev. 20), is preliminary, not ultimate (cf. Rev. 21-22). It is not obvious from the OT that a temporal reign is necessary; as a matter of fact, the

Messianic reign of Daniel 7 is eternal, not millennial.

SIXTH TENSION (imminent return of Christ vs. the delayed *Parousia*)

Most believers have been taught that Jesus is coming soon, suddenly, and unexpectedly (cf. Matt. 10:23; 24:27,34,44; Mark 9:1; 13:30; Rev. 1:1,3; 2:16; 3:11; 22:7,10,12,20). But every expectant generation of believers so far has been wrong! The soonness (immediacy) of Jesus' return is a powerful promised hope of every generation, but a reality to only one (and that one a persecuted one). Believers must live as if He were coming tomorrow, but plan and implement the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20) if He tarries.

Some passages in the Gospels (cf. Mark 13:10; Luke 17:2; 18:8) and I and II Thessalonians are based on a delayed Second Coming (*Parousia*). There are some historical events that must happen first:

1. world-wide evangelization (cf. Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10)
2. the revelation of "the man of Sin" (cf. Matt. 24:15; II Thess. 2; Rev. 13)
3. the great persecution (cf. Matt. 24:21,24; Rev. 13)

There is a purposeful ambiguity (cf. Matt. 24:42-51; Mark 13:32-36)! Live every day as if it were your last but plan and train for future ministry!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: TERAPHIM

From differing parts of the OT a composite description is difficult:

1. small and portable household idols, Gen. 31:19,34,35
2. large idol shaped like a human, I Sam. 19:13,16
3. idols used in homes, but also in shrines, Jdgs. 17:5; 18:14,17,18
4. idols used for knowing the future or will of the gods/god
 - a. condemned and paralleled with divination, I Sam. 15:23
 - b. condemned and paralleled with mediums, spiritists, and idols, II Kgs. 23:24
 - c. condemned and paralleled with divination, shaking arrows, and inspecting a sheep's liver, Ezek. 21:21
 - d. condemned and paralleled with diviners and false prophets, Zech. 10:2

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS FOR GOD'S REVELATION (using DEUTERONOMY and PSALMS)

I. "Statutes," BDB 349, "an enactment, decree, or ordinance"

- A. Masculine, טָוַר - Deut. 4:1, 5, 6, 8, 14, 40, 45; 5:1; 6:1, 24, 25; 7:11; 11:32; 16:12; 17:19; 26:17; 27:10; Ps. 2:7; 50:16; 81:4; 99:7; 105:10,45; 148:6
- B. Feminine, טָוַרָה - Deut. 6:2; 8:11; 10:13; 11:1; 28:15, 45; 30:10, 16; Ps. 89:31; 119:5, 8, 12, 16, 23, 26, 33, 48, 54, 64, 68, 71, 80, 83, 112, 124, 135, 145, 155, 171

II. "Law" BDB 435, "instruction"

- Deut. 1:5; 4:44; 17:11, 18, 19; 27:3, 8, 26; 28:58, 61; 29:21, 29; 30:10; 31:9; Ps. 1:2; 19:7; 78:10; 94:12; 105:45; 119:1, 18, 29, 34, 44, 51, 53, 55, 61, 70, 72, 77, 85, 92, 97, 109, 113, 126, 136, 142, 150, 153, 163, 165, 174

III. “Testimonies” BDB 730, “divine laws”

A. PLURAL, תְּהִלָּה - Deut. 4:45; 6:17,20; Ps. 25:10; 78:56; 93:5; 99:7; 119:22, 24, 46, 59, 79, 95, 119, 125, 138, 146, 152, 167, 168

B. תְּהִלָּה or תְּהִלָּה - Ps. 19:8; 78:5; 81:6; 119:2, 14, 31, 36, 88, 99, 111, 129, 144, 157

IV. “Precepts” BDB 824, “a charge”

- Ps. 19:8; 103:18; 111:7; 119:4,15,27,40,45,56,63,69,78,87,93,94,100, 104, 110,128,134,141,159,168,173

V. “Commandments” BDB 846

- Deut. 4:2,40; 5:29; 6:1, 2, 17, 25; 8:1, 2, 11; 10:13; 11:13; 15:5; 26:13,17; 30:11, 16; Ps. 19:8; 119:6, 10, 19, 21, 32, 35, 47, 48, 60, 66, 73, 86, 96, 98, 115, 127, 131, 143, 151, 166, 176

VI. “Judgments/ordinances” BDB 1048, “rulings” or “justice”

- Deut. 1:17; 4:1,5,8,14,45; 7:12; 16:18; 30:16; 33:10,21; Ps. 10:5; 18:23; 19:10; 48:12; 89:30; 97:8; 105:5,7; 119:7, 13, 20, 30, 39, 43, 52, 62, 75, 84, 102, 106, 120, 132, 137, 149, 156, 160, 164; 147:19; 149:9

VII. “His ways” BDB 202, YHWH’s guidelines for His people’s lifestyle

- Deut. 8:6; 10:12; 11:22, 28; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16; 32:4; Ps. 119:3, 5, 37, 59

VIII. “His words”

A. BDB 202 - Deut. 4:10,13,36; 9:10; 10:4; Ps. 119:9, 16, 17, 25, 28, 42, 43, 49, 57, 65, 74, 81, 89, 101, 105, 107, 114, 130, 139, 147, 160, 161, 169

B. BAB 57

1. “word” - Deut. 17:19; 18:19; 33:9; Ps. 119:11,67,103,162,170,172

2. “promise” - Ps. 119:38,41,50,58,76,82,116,133,140,148,154

3. “command” - Ps. 119:158

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THOUSAND (*ELEPH*)

This is the Hebrew word for “thousand” (BDB 48). However, it is used in several senses.

1. a family unit, Josh. 22:14; Jdgs. 6:15; I Sam. 23:23; Zech. 9:7; 12:6
2. a military unit, Exod. 18:21,25; Deut. 1:15
3. a literal thousand, Gen. 20:16; Exod. 32:28
4. a symbolic number, Gen. 24:60; Exod. 20:6; 34:7; Deut. 7:9; Jer. 32:18
5. the Ugaritic cognate *alluph* means “chieftain,” Gen. 36:15

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: TITHES IN THE MOSAIC LEGISLATION

A. Scripture References:

For Priests and Central Sanctuary	For Local Levites	For Local Poor
1. Lev. 27:30-32		
2. Deut. 12:6-7,11,17	Deut. 12:12	
3. Deut. 14:22-26	Deut. 14:27	Deut. 14:28-29
4.		Deut. 26:12-15
5. Num. 18:21-24	Num. 18:25-29 (Levites must tithe of their tithe to central shrine	Num. 18:21-29
6.	Neh. 10:37, 38	Neh. 12:44
7. Mal. 3:8, 19		

B. Examples of tithing predate Mosaic legislation

- 1. Genesis 14:20, Abraham to Melchizedek (Heb. 7:2-9)
- 2. Genesis 28:22, Jacob to YHWH

C. The tithes of Israel were used to support the central sanctuary, but every third year the national tithes were directed exclusively to the local poor.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY

Notice the activity of all three Persons of the Trinity. The term “trinity,” first coined by Tertullian, is not a biblical word, but the concept is pervasive.

- 1. the Gospels
 - a. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19 (and parallels)
 - b. John 14:26
- 2. Acts - Acts 2:32-33, 38-39
- 3. Paul
 - a. Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
 - b. I Cor. 2:8-10; 12:4-6
 - c. II Cor. 1:21; 13:14
 - d. Gal. 4:4-6
 - e. Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6
 - f. I Thess. 1:2-5
 - g. II Thess. 2:13
 - h. Titus 3:4-6

4. Peter - I Pet. 1:2
5. Jude - vv. 20-21

It is hinted at in the OT

1. Use of plurals for God
 - a. Name *Elohim* is plural, but when used of God always has a SINGULAR VERB
 - b. "Us" in Genesis 1:26-27; 3:22; 11:7
 - c. "One" in the *Shema* (BDB 1033) of Deut. 6:4 is plural (as it is in Gen. 2:24; Ezek. 37:17)
2. The angel of the Lord as a visible representative of deity
 - a. Genesis 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16
 - b. Exodus 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19
 - c. Judges 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
 - d. Zechariah 3:1-2
3. God and Spirit are separate, Gen. 1:1-2; Ps. 104:30; Isa. 63:9-11; Ezek. 37:13-14
4. God (YHWH) and Messiah (*Adon*) are separate, Ps. 45:6-7; 110:1; Zech. 2:8-11; 10:9-12
5. Messiah and Spirit are separate, Zech. 12:10
6. All three mentioned in Isa. 48:16; 61:1

The deity of Jesus and the personality of the Spirit caused problems for the strict, monotheistic, early believers:

1. Tertullian - subordinated the Son to the Father
2. Origen - subordinated the divine essence of the Son and the Spirit
3. Arius - denied deity to the Son and Spirit
4. Monarchianism - believed in a successive manifestation of God

The trinity is a historically developed formulation informed by the biblical material

1. The full deity of Jesus, equal to the Father, affirmed in A.D. 325 by the Council of Nicea
 2. The full personality and deity of the Spirit equal to the Father and Son was affirmed by the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381)
 3. The doctrine of the trinity is fully expressed in Augustine's work *De Trinitate*
- There is truly mystery here. But the NT seems to affirm one divine essence with three eternal personal manifestations.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

I. Old Testament

- A. All humans go to *She'ol* (etymology uncertain, BDB 1066), which is a way of referring to death or the grave, mostly in Wisdom Literature and Isaiah. In the OT it was a shadowy, conscious, but joyless existence (cf. Job 10:21-22; 38:17; Ps. 107:10,14).
- B. *She'ol* characterized
 1. associated with God's judgment (fire), Deut. 32:22
 2. associated with punishment even before Judgment Day, Ps. 18:4-5
 3. associated with *Abaddon* (destruction), also open to God, Job 26:6; Ps. 139:8;

Amos 9:2

4. associated with “the Pit” (grave), Ps.16:10; Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 31:15-17
5. wicked descend alive into *She’ol*, Num. 16:30,33; Ps. 55:15
6. personified often as an animal with a large mouth, Num. 16:30; Isa. 5:14; 14:9; Hab. 2:5
7. people there called *Repha’im*, Isa. 14:9-11)

II. New Testament

A. The Hebrew *She’ol* is translated by the Greek *Hades* (the unseen world)

B. *Hades* characterized

1. refers to death, Matt. 16:18
2. linked to death, Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14
3. often analogous to the place of permanent punishment (*Gehenna*), Matt. 11:23 (OT quote); Luke 10:15; 16:23-24
4. often analogous to the grave, Luke 16:23

C. Possibly divided (rabbis)

1. righteous part called paradise (really another name for heaven, cf. II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7), Luke 23:43
2. wicked part called *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4, where it is a holding place for evil angels (cf. Gen. 6; I Enoch)

D. *Gehenna*

1. Reflects the OT phrase, “the valley of the sons of Hinnom,” (south of Jerusalem). It was the place where the Phoenician fire god, *Molech* (BDB 574) was worshiped by child sacrifice (cf. II Kgs. 16:3; 21:6; II Chr. 28:3; 33:6), which was forbidden in Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5
2. Jeremiah changed it from a place of pagan worship into a site of YHWH’s judgment (cf. Jer. 7:32; 19:6-7). It became the place of fiery, eternal judgment in I Enoch 90:26-27 and Sib. 1:103.
3. The Jews of Jesus’ day were so appalled by their ancestors’ participation in pagan worship by child sacrifice, that they turned this area into the garbage dump for Jerusalem. Many of Jesus’ metaphors for eternal judgment came from this landfill (fire, smoke, worms, stench, cf. Mark 9:44,46). The term *Gehenna* is used only by Jesus (except in James 3:6).
4. Jesus’ usage of *Gehenna*
 - a. fire, Matt. 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43
 - b. permanent, Mark 9:48 (Matt. 25:46)
 - c. place of destruction (both soul and body), Matt. 10:28
 - d. paralleled to *She’ol*, Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9
 - e. characterizes the wicked as “son of hell,” Matt. 23:15
 - f. result of judicial sentence, Matt. 23:33; Luke 12:5
 - g. the concept of *Gehenna* is parallel to the second death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14) or the lake of fire (cf. Matt. 13:42,50; Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14-15; 21:8). It is possible the lake of fire becomes the permanent dwelling place of humans (from *She’ol*) and evil angels (from *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6 or the abyss, cf. Luke

8:31; Rev. 9:1-10; 20:1,3).

h. it was not designed for humans, but for Satan and his angels, Matt. 25:41

E. It is possible, because of the overlap of *She'ol*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna* that

1. originally all humans went to *She'ol/Hades*
2. their experience there (good/ bad) is exacerbated after Judgment Day, but the place of the wicked remains the same (this is why the KJV translated *hades* (grave) as *gehenna* (hell).
3. only NT text to mention torment before Judgment is the parable of Luke 16:19-31 (Lazarus and the Rich Man). *She'ol* is also described as a place of punishment now (cf. Deut. 32:22; Ps. 18:1-5). However, one can not establish a doctrine on a parable.

III. Intermediate state between death and resurrection

A. The NT does not teach the “immortality of the soul,” which is one of several ancient views of the after life.

1. human souls exist before their physical life
2. human souls are eternal before and after physical death
3. often the physical body is seen as a prison and death as release back to pre-existent state

B. The NT hints at a disembodied state between death and resurrection

1. Jesus speaks of a division between body and soul, Matt. 10:28
2. Abraham may have a body now, Mark 12:26-27; Luke 16:23
3. Moses and Elijah have a physical body at the transfiguration, Matt. 17
4. Paul asserts that at the Second Coming the souls with Christ will get their new bodies first, II Thess. 4:13-18
5. Paul asserts that believers get their new spiritual bodies on Resurrection Day, I Cor. 15:23,52
6. Paul asserts that believers do not go to *Hades*, but at death are with Jesus, II Cor. 5:6,8; Phil. 1:23. Jesus overcame death and took the righteous to heaven with Him, I Pet. 3:18-22.

IV. Heaven

A. This term is used in three senses in the Bible:

1. the atmosphere above the earth, Gen. 1:1,8; Isa. 42:5; 45:18
2. the starry heavens, Gen. 1:14; Deut. 10:14; Ps. 148:4; Heb. 4:14; 7:26
3. the place of God's throne, Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 148:4; Eph. 4:10; Heb. 9:24 (third heaven, II Cor. 12:2)

B. The Bible does not reveal much about the afterlife. Probably because fallen humans have no way or capacity to understand (cf. I Cor. 2:9).

C. Heaven is both a place (cf. John 14:2-3) and a person (cf. II Cor. 5:6,8). Heaven may be a restored Garden of Eden (Gen. 1-2; Rev. 21-22). The earth will be cleansed and restored (cf. Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:21; II Pet. 3:10). The image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) is restored in Christ. Now the intimate fellowship of the Garden of Eden is possible again.

However, this may be metaphorical (heaven as a huge, cubed city of Rev. 21:9-27)

and not literal. I Corinthians 15 describes the difference between the physical body and the spiritual body
as the seed to the mature plant. Again, I Cor. 2:9 (a quote from Isa. 64:6 and 65:17) is a great promise and hope! I know that when we see Him we will be like Him (cf. I John 3:2).

V. Helpful resources

A. William Hendriksen, *The Bible On the Life Hereafter*

B. Maurice Rawlings, *Beyond Death's Door*

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY GOD CLOTHED ADAM AND EVE WITH ANIMAL SKINS

- A. As a provision for the harsh life outside of Eden
- B. To cover their sensed shame of nakedness
- C. To show the lawfulness of using animals for mankind's needs
- D. To show the difference in mankind's provisions (leaves) and God's (skins)
- E. To remind them of their own coming death (cf. Gen. 5)
- F. To foreshadow the clothing metaphor of Christ's imputed righteousness given to us as a new garment (cf. Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:8,10,12,14; James 1:21 I Pet. 2:1)
- G. To show God's continuing love and provision for mankind, even though fallen

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WILDERNESSES OF THE EXODUS

- 1. Wilderness of Shur - in northeast Egypt (e.g., Exod. 15:22)
- 2. Wilderness of Paran - central Sinai Peninsula (e.g., Gen. 21:21; Num. 10:12; 12:16; 13:3,26)
- 3. Wilderness of Sin - southern Sinai Peninsula (e.g., Exod. 16:1; 17:1; Num. 33:11,12, also called "wilderness of Sinai," e.g., Exod. 19:1,2; Num. 1:1,19; 3:4; 9:1,5)
- 4. Wilderness of Zin - southern Canaan (e.g., Num. 13:21; 20:1; 27:14; 33:36; 34:3; Deut. 32:51)

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: WINE AND STRONG DRINK

I. Biblical Terms

A. Old Testament

- 1. *Yayin* - This is the general term for "wine," which is used 141 times (BDB 406). The etymology is uncertain because it is not from a Hebrew root. It always means fermented fruit juice, usually grape. Some typical passages are Gen. 9:21; Exod. 29:40; Num. 15:5,10.
- 2. *Tirosh* - This is "new wine" (BDB 440). However, because of climatic conditions of the near east, fermentation began as soon as 6 hours after extracting the juice. This term refers to wine in the process of

fermenting. For some typical passages see: Deut. 12:17; 18:4; Isa. 62:8-9; Hos. 4:11.

3. *Asis* - Joel 1:5 and Isa. 49:26 show that it is obviously alcoholic (BDB 779).
4. *Sekar* - This is the term “strong drink” (BDB 1016, cf. Isa. 5:1). It has something added to it to make it more intoxicating. The same Hebrew root is used in the term “drunk” or “drunkard.”

B. New Testament

1. *Oinos* - the Greek equivalent of *Yayin*.
2. *Neos oinos* (new wine) - the Greek equivalent of *tirosh* (cf. Mark 2:22).
3. *Gleuchos vinos* (sweet wine, *asis*) - wine in the early stages of fermentation (cf. Acts 2:13).

II. Fermentation

- A. Fermentation begins very soon, often the first day (6 hrs. after juice is extracted).
- B. When a slight foam appears on the surface, Jewish tradition says that it is liable to the wine-tithe (*Ma aseroth* 1:7).
- C. The primary fermentation is over in one week.
- D. The secondary fermentation takes about 40 days. At this stage it is considered aged wine and can be offered on the altar (*Edhuyyoth* 6:1).
- E. Wine that is resting on its “lees” (aging sediment) is considered good, but wine must be strained well before use.
- F. Three years is the longest period of time that wine can be stored. It is called “old wine.” It is considered the best usually after one year of fermentation.
- G. Only in the last 100 years, with sterile conditions and chemical additives, has it become possible to postpone the fermentation process.

III. Biblical Usage

A. Old Testament

1. Wine is a gift of God (cf. Gen. 27:28; Ps. 104:14-15; Eccl. 9:7; Hos. 2:8-9; Joel 2:19,24; Amos 9:13; Zech. 10:7).
2. Wine is part of a sacrificial offering (cf. Exod. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:7,10; 28:14; Jdg. 9:13).
3. Wine was used at Israel’s feasts (cf. Deut. 14:26).
4. Wine is used as medicine (cf. II Sam. 16:2; Prov. 31:6-7).
5. Wine can be a real problem (Noah: Gen. 9:21; Lot: Gen. 19:33,35; Samson: Jdg. 16:19; Nabal: I Sam. 25:36; Uriah: II Sam. 11:13; Ammon: II Sam. 13:28; Elah: I Kgs. 20:12; Rulers: Amos 6:6; Ladies: Amos 4).
6. Wine has its accompanying warning against abuse (cf. Prov. 20:1; 23:20-21, 29-35; 31:4-5; Isa. 5:11,22; 19:14; 28:7-8; Hos. 4:11).
7. Wine was prohibited to certain groups (Priests on duty, Lev. 10:9; Ezek. 44:21; Nazirites, Num. 6; rulers, Prov. 31:4-5; Isa. 56:11-12; Hos. 7:5).
8. Wine is used in an eschatological setting (cf. Amos 9:13; Joel 3:18; Zech. 9:17).

B. Inter-biblical

1. Wine in moderation is very helpful (Ecclesiasticus 31:27-30).
2. The rabbis say “Wine is the greatest of all medicine, where wine is lacking, then drugs are needed” (BB 58b).
3. Mixed wine and water is not harmful, but delicious, and enhances one’s

enjoyment (II Macc. 15:39).

C. New Testament

1. Jesus turned water into wine (cf. John 2:1-11).
2. Jesus used wine (cf. Matt. 11:16, 18-19; Luke 7:33-34; 22:17ff)
3. Peter accused of drunkenness on “new wine” at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:13).
4. Wine used as medicine (cf. Mark 15:23; Luke 10:34; I Tim. 5:23).
5. Leaders are not to be abusers. This does not mean total abstainers (cf. I Tim. 3:3,8; Titus 1:7; 2:3; I Pet. 4:3).
6. Wine used in eschatological settings (cf. Matt. 22:1ff; Rev. 19:9).
7. Drunkenness is deplored (cf. Matt. 24:49; Luke 11:45; 21:34 I Cor. 5:11-13; 6:10; Gal. 5:21; I Pet. 4:3; Rom. 13:1-14)

IV. Theological Insight

A. Dialectical Tension

1. Wine is the gift of God.
2. Drunkenness is a major problem
3. Our example is Christ (cf. Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; Rom. 14; I Cor. 8:7-13).

B. Tendency to go beyond God-given bounds

1. God is the sources of all good things.
2. Man has abused all of God’s gifts by taking them beyond bounds.

C. Abuse is in us, not in things. There is nothing evil in the physical creation (cf. Rom. 14:14, 20).

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

I. The Old Testament

A. Culturally women were considered property.

1. included in list of property (Exod. 20:17)
2. treatment of slave women (Exod. 21:7-11)
3. women’s vows annulable by socially responsible male (Num. 30)
4. women as spoils of war (Deut. 20:10-14; 21:10-14)

B. Practically there was a mutuality

1. male and female made in God’s image (Gen. 1:26-27)
2. honor father and mother (Exod. 20:12 [Deut. 5:16])
3. reverence mother and father (Lev. 19:3; 20:9)
4. men and women could be Nazarites (Num. 6:1-2)
5. daughters have right of inheritance (Num. 27:1-11)
6. part of covenant people (Deut. 29:10-12)
7. observe teaching of father and mother (Prov. 1:8; 6:20)
8. sons and daughters of Heman (Levite family) led music in Temple (I Chr. 25:5-6)

9. son and daughter will prophesy in new age (Joel 2:28-29)

C. Women were in leadership roles

1. Moses' sister, Miriam, called a prophetess (Exod. 15:20-21)
2. women gifted by God to construct Tabernacle (Exod. 35:25-26)
3. a woman, Deborah, also a prophetess (cf. Jdgs. 4:4), led all the tribes (Jdgs. 4:4-5; 5:7)
4. Huldah was a prophetess whom King Josiah had to read and interpret the newly-found "Book of the Law" (II Kings 22:14; II Chr. 34:22-27)
5. Ruth, godly woman was ancestress of David
6. Esther, godly woman saved Jews in Persia

II. The New Testament

A. Culturally women in both Judaism and the Greco-Roman world were second class citizens with few rights or privileges (the exception was Macedonia)

B. Women in leadership roles

1. Elizabeth and Mary, godly women available to God (Luke 1-2)
2. Anna, godly woman serving at the Temple (Luke 2:36)
3. Lydia, believer and leader of a house church (Acts 16:14,40)
4. Philip's four daughters, were prophetesses (Acts 21:8-9)
5. Phoebe, deaconess of church at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1)
6. Prisca (Priscilla), Paul's fellow-worker and teacher of Apollos (Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:3)
7. Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Julia, Nereus' sister, several women co-workers of Paul (Rom. 16:6-16)
8. Junia (KJV), possibly a woman apostle (Rom. 16:7)
9. Euodia and Syntyche, co-workers with Paul (Phil. 4:2-3)

III. How does a modern believer balance the divergent biblical examples?

A. How does one determine historical or cultural truths which only apply to the original context from eternal truths valid for all churches, all believers of all ages?

1. We must take the intent of the original inspired author very seriously. The Bible is the Word of God and the only source for faith and practice
2. We must deal with the obviously historically conditioned inspired texts
 - a. the cultus (i.e., ritual and liturgy) of Israel
 - b. first century Judaism
 - c. Paul's obviously historically conditioned statements in I Corinthians
 - (1) the legal system of pagan Rome
 - (2) remaining a slave (7:20-24)
 - (3) celibacy (7:1-35)
 - (4) virgins (7:36-38)
 - (5) food sacrificed to an idol (8; 10:23-33)
 - (6) unworthy actions at Lord's Supper (11)
3. God fully and clearly revealed Himself to a particular culture, a particular day. We must take seriously the revelation, but not every aspect of its historical accommodation. The Word of God was written in the

words of men.

B. Biblical interpretation must seek the original author's intent. What was he saying to his day?

This is foundational and crucial for proper interpretation, but then we must apply this to our own day. Now, here is the problem with women in leadership (the real interpretive problem may be defining the term. Were there more ministries than pastors who were seen as leadership? Were deaconesses or prophetesses seen as leaders?) It is quite clear that Paul, in I Cor. 14:34-35 and I Tim. 2:9-15, is

asserting that women should not take the lead in public worship! But how do I apply that today? I do not want Paul's culture or my culture to silence God's Word and will. Possibly Paul's day was too limiting, but also my day may be too open. I feel so uncomfortable saying that Paul's words and teachings are conditional, first century, local situational truths. Who am I that I should let my mind or my culture negate an inspired author?!

However, what do I do when there are biblical examples of women leaders (even in Paul's writings, cf. Romans 16)? A good example of this is Paul's discussion of public worship in I Cor. 11-14. In 11:5 he seems to allow women's preaching and praying in public worship with their heads covered, yet in 14:34-35, he demands they remain silent! There were deaconesses (cf. Rom. 16:1) and prophetesses (cf. Acts 21:9). It is this diversity that allows me freedom to identify Paul's

comments (as relates to restrictions on women) as limited to first century Corinth and Ephesus. In both churches, there were problems with women exercising their new-found freedom (cf. Bruce Winter, *Corinth After Paul Left*), which could have caused difficulty for their church in reaching their society for Christ. Their freedom had to be limited so that the gospel could be more effective.

My day is just the opposite of Paul's. In my day the gospel might be limited if trained, articulate women are not allowed to share the gospel, not allowed to lead! What is the ultimate goal of public worship? Is it not evangelism and discipleship? Can God be honored and pleased with women leaders? The Bible as a whole seems to say "yes"!

I want to yield to Paul; my theology is primarily Pauline. I do not want to be overly influenced or manipulated by modern feminism! However, I feel the church has been slow to respond to obvious biblical truths, like the inappropriateness of slavery, racism, bigotry, and sexism. It has also

been slow to respond appropriately to the abuse of women in the modern world. God in Christ set free the slave and the woman. I dare not let a culture-bound text reshackle them.

One more point: as an interpreter I know that Corinth was a very disrupted church. The charismatic gifts were prized and flaunted. Women may have been caught up in this. I also believe that Ephesus was being affected by false teachers who were taking advantage of women and using them as surrogate speakers in the house churches of Ephesus.

C. Suggestions for further reading

1. *How to Read the Bible For All It's Worth* by Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart (pp. 61-77)
2. *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* by Gordon Fee
3. *Hard Sayings of the Bible* by Walter C. Kaiser, Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce and Manfred T. Branch (pp. 613-616; 665-667)

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

I. Introduction

A. Some important questions

1. What is worship?
2. When and how did it begin?
3. What is its content?
4. Who participates?
5. Where and when is it done?

B. These questions will form the outline for our study. It must be remembered that there is no definitive answer to these questions, but there are scriptural implications and historical developments.

II. What is Worship?

A. The English term comes from a Saxon term, “weorthscipe,” which denoted someone to whom honor and respect were due.

B. The major OT terms are:

1. *‘Abodah*, which is from a Hebrew root that means “to serve” or “to labor.” It is usually translated “the service of God.”
2. *Hishtawah*, which is from a Hebrew root that means “to bow” or “to prostrate oneself” (cf. Exod. 4:31).

C. The major NT terms follow the Hebrew terms.

1. For *‘abodah* there is *latrria*, which is the state of a hired laborer or slave.
2. For *hishtawah* there is *proskuneo*, which means “to prostrate oneself,” “to adore,” or “to worship.”

D. Notice that there are two areas which worship impacts.

1. our attitude of respect
2. our lifestyle actions

These two must go together or else major problems result (cf. Deut. 11:13).

III. When and How Did it Begin?

A. The OT does not specifically state the origins of worship, but there are several hints in Genesis.

1. God’s institution of the Sabbath in Gen. 2:1-3 is later developed into the major weekly worship day. In Genesis it states that God set a precedent for mankind’s rest and worship by His actions and attitudes toward this weekly time segment.
2. God’s killing of the animals to provide the fallen couple’s clothes to endure their new fallen environment in Gen. 3:21 seems to set the stage for the use of animals for mankind’s needs, which will develop into the sacrificial system.
3. Cain and Abel’s sacrifice of Gen. 4:3ff seems to have been a regular occurrence, not a one-time event. This is not a disparaging passage on vegetable offerings or a prescription for animal sacrifice, but a vivid example of the need for a proper attitude toward God. It does show that somehow

God communicated His acceptance and rejection.

4. The godly Messianic line of Seth is developed in Gen. 4:25ff. It mentions the covenant name of God, YHWH, in v. 26 in an apparent worship setting (this passage must be reconciled with Exod. 6:3).
5. Noah states a distinction between clean and unclean animals in Gen. 7:2. This sets the state for his sacrifices in Gen. 8:20-21. This implies that sacrifices were well established at an early period.
6. Abraham was well acquainted with sacrifice, which is obvious from Gen. 12:7,8; 13:18; 22:9. It forms his response to God's presence and promises. Apparently his descendants continued this practice.
7. The book of Job is in a patriarchal setting (i.e. 2000). He was familiar with sacrifice as is seen in Job 1:5.
8. The biblical material seems to clarify that sacrifice developed out of mankind's awe and respect for God and God's revealed procedures on how to express this.

- a. Ten Commandments and Holiness Code
- b. Tabernacle Cultus

IV. What is its Content?

- A. It is obvious that mankind's attitude is the key in sacrifice (cf. Gen. 4:3ff). This personal element has always been a pillar in revealed biblical faith (cf. Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13; 30:6; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-27; Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:15).
- B. However, mankind's reverent attitude was codified into ritual very early.

1. rites of purification (related to a sense of sin)
2. rites of service (feasts, sacrifice, gifts, etc.)
3. rites of personal worship (public and private prayers and praise)

- C. When we address the question of content it is important that we notice the three sources of revelation (cf. Jer. 18:18).

1. Moses and the cultus (priests)
2. The sages of Wisdom Literature
3. The prophets

Each of these has added to our understanding of worship. Each focuses on a consistent and vital aspect of worship.

1. form (Exodus - Numbers)
2. lifestyle (Ps. 40:1ff; Mic. 6:6-8)
3. motive (I Sam. 15:22; Jer. 7:22-26; Hos. 6:6)

- D. Jesus follows the OT pattern of worship. He never ridiculed the OT (cf. Matt. 5:17ff), but He did reject the Oral Tradition as it had developed by the first century.
- E. The early church continued with Judaism for a period (i.e. up to the rabbinical revival and reforms of A.D. 90) and then began to develop its own uniqueness, but generally on a synagogue pattern. The centrality of Jesus, His life, His teachings, His crucifixion and His resurrection took the place of the OT cultus. Preaching, baptism, and the Eucharist became focal acts. The Sabbath was replaced with the Lord's Day.

V. Who Participates?

- A. The patriarchal culture of the ancient near East sets the stage for man's leadership role in all areas of life, including religion.

- B. The Patriarch acted as priest to his family in both sacrifice and religious instruction (Job 1:5).
- C. For Israel the priest assumed the religious tasks in public, corporate worship setting, while the father retained this place in private worship settings. With the Babylonian Exile (586 B.C.) the Synagogue and the rabbis developed into a central position in training and worship. After the Temple's destruction in A.D. 70, rabbinical Judaism, which developed from Pharisees, became dominant.
- D. In the church setting the patriarchal pattern is preserved, but with the added emphasis on women's giftedness and equality (cf. I Cor. 11:5; Gal. 3:28; Acts 21:9; Rom. 16:1; II Tim. 3:11). This equality is seen in Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18. This equality is damaged by the rebellion of Gen. 3, but is restored through Christ.
Children have always been fellowshipped into worship setting through their parents, however, the Bible is an adult oriented book.

VI. Where and When is Worship Done?

- A. In Genesis humanity reveres the places where they have met God. These sites become altars. After crossing of the Jordan several sites develop (Gilgal, Bethel, Shechem), but Jerusalem is chosen as the special dwelling place of God connected with the Ark of the Covenant (cf. Deut.).
- B. Agricultural times have always set the state for humanity's gratitude to God for His provision. Other special sensed needs, such as forgiveness, developed into special cultic days (i.e., Lev. 16, Day of Atonement). Judaism developed set feast days—Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (cf. Lev. 23). It also allowed for special opportunities for individuals (cf. Ezek. 18).
- C. The development of the synagogue provided structure to the concept of Sabbath worship. The church changed this to the Lord's Day (the first day of the week) apparently on Jesus' repeated pattern of appearing to them on Sunday evenings after the resurrection.
- D. At first the early church met daily (Acts 2:46), but this apparently soon was dropped for private worship during the week and corporate worship on Sundays.

VII. Conclusion

- A. Worship of God is not something humans invented or instituted. Worship is a felt need.
- B. Worship is a response to who God is and what He has done for us in Christ.
- C. Worship involves the whole person. It is both form and attitude. It is both public and private.
It is both scheduled and extemporaneous.
- D. True worship is an outgrowth of a personal relationship.
- E. The most helpful NT theological passage on worship is probably John 4:19-26.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S COVENANT REQUIREMENTS OF ISRAEL

YHWH's requirements (BDB 981, KB 1371, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) are stated clearly in a series of *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS:

1. "to fear the LORD" - BDB 431, KB 432, cf. 4:29; 10:20
2. "to walk in all His ways" - BDB 229, KB 246, cf. 4:29
3. "to love Him" - BDB 12, KB 17, cf. 6:5; 10:15; see full note at 5:10
4. "to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul" - BDB 712, KB 773, cf. 4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 26:16; 30:2,6,10
5. "to keep the LORD's commandments and His statutes" - BDB 1036, KB 1581

This passage is similar to Micah 6:6-8. Both speak of a faith that affects daily life!

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S GRACE ACTS TO ISRAEL

It must be stated clearly that the Exodus, the Wilderness Wandering, and the Conquest were grace acts on YHWH's part, not merited rewards due to Israel's actions:

1. It was YHWH's love for "the fathers" - Deut. 4:37-38; 7:8; 10:15
2. It was not Israel's number - Deut. 7:7
3. It was not Israel's strength and power - Deut. 8:17
4. It was not Israel's righteousness or uprightness - Deut. 9:5-6
5. YHWH continues to love Israel even amidst judgment - Jer. 31:3

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: YOM

Theories of the meaning of yom (day) taken and adapted from Dr. John Harris' (Dean of the School of Christian Studies and Professor of OT at East Texas Baptist University) OT Survey I Notebook:

1. The Literal Twenty-Four Hour Period Theory

This is the straightforward approach (cf. Exod. 20:9-11). Questions arising from this approach:

- a. How was there light on day one when the sun was not created until day four?
- b. How were all the animals (especially those original to other parts of the world) named in less than one day? (cf. Gen. 2:19-20)?

2. The Day-Age Theory

This theory attempts to harmonize science (particularly geology) with Scripture. This theory states that the "days" were "geological ages" in length. Their length is unequal, and they approximate the various layers described in uniformitarian geology. Scientists tend to agree with the general development of Gen. 1: vapor and a watery mass preceded the separation of land and sea prior to the appearance of life. Vegetable life came before animal life, and mankind represented the latest and most complex form of life. Questions arising from this approach:

- a. How did plants survive for "ages" without the sun?
- b. How did pollination take place in plants if insects and birds were not made until "ages" later?

3. The Alternate Age-Day Theory

The days are in fact twenty-four hour periods, but each day is separated by ages in which what was created developed. Questions arising from this approach.

- a. The same problems arise as in the Day-Age Theory.
- b. Does the text indicate "day" to be used both as twenty-four hours and as an era?

4. The Progressive Creation-Catastrophe Theory

This theory goes as follows: between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2, there was an indefinite period of time in which the geological ages took place; during this period, the pre-historic creatures in the order suggested by the fossils were created; around 200,000 years ago, a supernatural disaster occurred and destroyed much of the life on this planet and made many animals extinct; then the days of Genesis 1 occurred. These days refer to a re-creation, rather than to an original creation.

5. The Eden-Only Theory

The creation account refers only to the creation and physical aspects of the Garden of Eden.

6. The Gap Theory

Based on Gen. 1:1, God created a perfect world. Based on Gen. 1:2, Lucifer (Satan) was placed in charge of the world and rebelled. God then judged Lucifer and the world by utter destruction. For millions of years, the world was left alone and the geological ages passed. Based on Gen. 1:3-2:3, in 4004 b.c.e., the six literal twenty-four hour days of re-creation occurred. Bishop Ussher (a.d. 1654) used the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 to calculate and date the creation of humanity ca. 4004 b.c.e. However, genealogies do not represent complete chronological schemes.

7. The Sacred Week Theory

The writer of the book of Genesis used the concept of days and a week as a literary device to put across the divine message of the activity of God in creation. Such a structure illustrates the beauty and symmetry of God's creative work.

[\(Return to Index\)](#)

SPECIAL TOPIC: ZECHARIAH

I. NAME OF THE BOOK

- A. It is named after the prophet.
- B. His name meant "YHWH remembers," "remembered by YHWH," or "YHWH has remembered." His name implied that YHWH was still with the Jews and had restored the covenant.

II. CANONIZATION

- A. This book is part of the "latter prophets" (*Ecclesiasticus* 49:10).
- B. It is part of "the Twelve," a grouping of minor prophets (*Baba Bathra* 14b):
 - 1. like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, they fit on one scroll.
 - 2. they represent the twelve tribes or the symbolic number of organization.
 - 3. they reflect traditional view of the books chronology.
- C. The order of "the Twelve" or Minor Prophets has been linked by many scholars to a chronological sequence. It is obvious that Haggai and Zechariah form a historical pair.

III. GENRE

- A. This book is an example of apocalyptic literature:
 - 1. Chapters 1-8 are basically prose.
 - 2. Chapters 9-14 are basically poetry.
- B. This genre was unique to the Jews. It was often used in tension-filled times to express the conviction that God is in control of history and would bring deliverance to His people.
- C. It was characterized by
 - 1. a strong sense of the universal sovereignty of God
 - 2. a struggle between good and evil in this age
 - 3. use of secret code words

4. use of colors
5. use of numbers
6. use of animals, sometimes animals/humans
7. God communicates His revelation by means of dreams or visions usually through angelic mediation
8. primarily focuses on the future

D. Some other examples are

1. Old Testament

- a. Daniel 7-12
- b. Ezekiel 37-48 (?)

2. New Testament

- a. Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, II Thess. 2
- b. Revelation

3. non-canonical

- a. I Enoch
- b. IV Ezra (Esdras)
- c. II Baruch

E. Jerome calls Zechariah the most obscure book in the OT. Yet, it is alluded to extensively in the NT:

1. chapters 1-8 in the book of Revelation.
2. chapters 9-14 in the Gospels.

F. These visions are difficult to interpret but if we keep the historical setting in mind they must relate to the rebuilding of the Temple in post-exilic Jerusalem. They are focusing on a new day of forgiveness and the coming of the Messiah.

IV. AUTHOR

- A. Zechariah was a very common Hebrew name. It was spelled two ways: Zechariah or Zachariah. There are 27 people in the OT who spell it with an “e” and 2 who spell it with an “a.”
- B. Chapter 1:1 says that he is a priest (cf. Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Neh. 12:4,16). Why Berechiah, who is mentioned in 1:1 but was omitted in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14 is uncertain. This would make Zechariah an early post-exilic prophet like Haggai and Malachi, and possibly Obadiah and Joel.
- C. Many modern scholars deny the unity of Zechariah. This is because chapters 1-8 are so different from chapters 9-14. In chapters 1-8 the prophet is named and the historical dates are given. The setting is obviously post-exilic. This section is alluded to extensively by John in his book of the Revelation. However, chapters 9-14 are undated. There is no prophet named. The historical setting is eschatological. This section is alluded to most often in the Gospels. In Matt. 27:9 Jesus attributes a quote to Jeremiah which is from Zech. 11:12-13. This was the beginning of the trend toward denying authorship of chapters 9-14 to Zechariah. However, even the Dead Sea Scrolls have Zechariah as a unity. There are several internal items which point to a unity:

1. the use of the number “two” - 4:3; 5:9; 6:1; 11:7; 13:8,
2. the use of the VOCATIVE - 2:7,10; 3:2,8; 4:7; 9:9,13; 11:1-2; 13:7,
3. the use of the phrase “from passing and from returning” which is unique to Zechariah - 7:14; 9:8,
4. the repeated use of “saith the Lord” - used 16 times,
5. the *qal* form of “to dwell” - 2:8; 7:7; 12:6; 14:10.

(These are taken from R.K. Harrison’s *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p.954.) For further discussion of the unity of the book (cf. E. J. Young’s *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p.280).

D. The fact that Zechariah is made up of a historical and future section should not be surprising. We have seen this pattern before:

1. Isaiah 1-39 and 40-66
2. Ezekiel 1-29 and 30-48
3. Daniel 1-6 and 7-12

E. A new *Old Testament Introduction* by Andrew Hill and John Walton, on p. 421, outlines both divisions by a series of chiasmic parallelism (a, b, b, a or a, b, c, b, a). This consistent literary technique gives future evidence of one author.

V. DATE

- A. Zechariah 1:1 states that the prophet began his ministry in the 2nd year of the 8th month of the reign of Darius I (522-486 B.C.). Most scholars assert that this is Darius I Hystapes who took over the kingdom of Persia after Cambyses II (530-522), Cyrus II’s son, died in 522 B.C. Darius was a general of the Persian Army.
- B. This would make the date 519 or 520 B.C. (2 months after Haggai). He preached about two years (cf. 1:1,7; 7:1).

IV. MAIN TRUTHS

- A. The major purpose of the book is the encouraging of the returned Jews to rebuild the Temple. This was started by Sheshbazzar, Ezra 1:8; 5:16, but had not been continued under Zerubbabel. The Temple had been neglected for several years. Haggai asserts that this is because of the apathy of the people while Ezra implies that it was the political maneuvers of the surrounding provinces, especially Samaria.
- B. This book is very Messianic. Many of the prophecies about Jesus’ life came from chaps. 9-14:
 1. king is humble and riding on the foal of a donkey, 9:9,
 2. sold for thirty shekels of silver, the price of a slave, and a potter’s field as Judas’s burial place, 11:13,
 3. emphasis on descendant from David, 12:4-9,
 4. “they will look on Me whom they have pierced...” 12:10.
- C. The universal love and reign of God is seen in 2:11; 8:20-23; 14:9,16. But in chapters 9-14 the universal rebellion of all peoples is stressed, 12:3 & 14:2 (Ps. 2).

[\(Return to Index\)](#)